

A LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS



ALICE
TURNER
CURTIS



Class PZ7

Book C941Lh

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

A LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS



"YOU ARE A LITTLE HEROINE, AND I WISH YOU WERE MY OWN
LITTLE GIRL." — *Page 245.*

LITTLE HEROINE SERIES

A

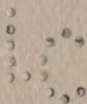
LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

A YOUNG GIRL'S PATRIOTISM
AND DARING

BY

ALICE TURNER CURTIS

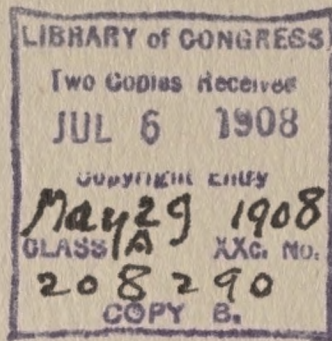
ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN HUYBERS



BOSTON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

PZ 7
C941Lh



Published, August, 1908.

COPYRIGHT, 1908, BY LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD Co.

All Rights Reserved.

A LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS.



Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	EDITH'S NEW HOME	1
II.	THE WALNUT GROVE	16
III.	A TRIP TO THE CORNERS	27
IV.	BLACK BETTY RUNS AWAY	44
V.	EDITH AND HAMILTON	57
VI.	THE DESERTER	73
VII.	NEW FRIENDS	84
VIII.	A FOX AND A FAIRY	95
IX.	BRUIN'S VISIT	107
X.	A VISIT TO BRIDGE ROCK	124
XI.	DAVID DISAPPEARS	137
XII.	THE MAKING OF A HERO	148
XIII.	NEWS FROM DAVID	163
XIV.	EDITH LEARNS TO RIDE BLACK BETTY .	178
XV.	A CHARADE PARTY	194
XVI.	EDITH'S JOURNEY	204
XVII.	THE INVASION OF ILLINOIS	221
XVIII.	A CURE FOR LISPING	231
XIX.	THE HALLOWE'EN SURPRISE	244

ILLUSTRATIONS

“YOU ARE A LITTLE HEROINE, AND I WISH YOU
WERE OUR OWN LITTLE GIRL.” (Page 245) .
Frontispiece ✓

FACING PAGE

“I GUESS BETTY KNOWS I HAVE COME HERE TO
LIVE” 8 ✓

“AND OUR FLAG MEANS MORE THAN THAT; IT
MEANS FREEDOM” 34 ✓

“ARE YOUR FOLKS AT HOME, LITTLE GIRL?” 66 ✓

“OH! YOU HANDSOME FOX!” 96 ✓

BOTH DAVID AND HAMILTON REALIZED THAT
THERE WAS NOT A MOMENT TO LOSE 132 ✓

THEN SHE WOULD TELL THE BOYS STORIES OF
THE WORLD’S GREAT HEROES 140 ✓

SHE REALIZED THAT THERE WAS A WALK OF
NEARLY TWENTY MILES BEFORE HER 218 ✓

A LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

CHAPTER I

EDITH'S NEW HOME

EDITH AUSTIN stood in the doorway of a small house on the bluffs that faced toward the Mississippi River. Beside her rested a carpet-bag. It was made of flowered brussels carpet, and had handles of black leather, and it contained all the little girl's possessions. She named them over to herself as she stood waiting for the team to come which was to take her to her new home: —

“My round comb, my knife with a blade and a half a blade, my white stockings that I knit myself —” Just here her thoughts

2 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

were interrupted by the appearance of her half-sister, Mrs. Stone.

She was a tall, thin woman with small, sharp, brown eyes. Her thin, reddish-brown hair was drawn into a small knot on the top of her head. She looked down at Edith kindly.

“Now you be a real good girl, Edith, while you are at Mrs. Freeman’s. You know Captain Freeman is away most of the time, so she wants you for company.”

Edith nodded happily. She was thinking about Mrs. Freeman, whom she had visited the summer before, and about the big, comfortable house, with its broad piazzas, and of the big barns and the shady trees. It seemed to her that nothing could be nicer than to live with Mrs. Freeman.

“You can come and make me a visit in the fall,” went on Eliza. “I guess Mrs. Freeman will be willing.”

Mr. Stone drove around the corner, and

Eliza put the carpet-bag into the back of the wagon, and Edith climbed up to the seat beside her brother-in-law and started off for her new home.

Edith was ten years old. She could not remember her father and mother. Ever since she was a tiny baby she had lived with her sister, Mrs. Stone. The Stones, as Mrs. Freeman said, were "great hands to move," and Edith had crossed the Mississippi several times, for Mr. Stone had lived first in Illinois and then in Missouri, and his frequent moves had meant being ferried across the river. Mrs. Freeman had been kind to the family when they had lived near her home, and had now sent for Edith to come and make her a long visit, and had spoken of a wish to adopt the little girl.

Edith made a good many promises to herself that morning as she rode toward her new home.

It was nearly noon when the team reached the Freeman farm. Mrs. Freeman was at

4 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

the door to welcome them, and gave Edith a kiss when the little girl ran up the steps.

The first afternoon passed very quickly. Mrs. Freeman told Edith that she was to have the big front chamber, which was right across the small entry from Mrs. Freeman's room.

"Why, that is your company room!" said Edith, looking about the big clean chamber, with its black walnut furniture, its three-ply carpet with wonderful red roses on a cream-colored background, and the muslin curtains trimmed with fringe, which hung at the windows. She wished that Eliza could have a nice bedroom like that. Eliza's house only had three rooms.

"Of course it is my company room," said Mrs. Freeman, "and when I have company that I want to have stay a long time, I always give them the best room."

The next morning, after they had had breakfast and Edith had helped set away the dishes, Mrs. Freeman brought up a big

jar of cream from the cellar. "This is my day to churn," she said to Edith, who sat by the window, looking out at the big bed of irises which were just blossoming.

"Maybe sometime Mrs. Freeman will love me the same way that mothers love a little girl," thought Edith. "And maybe I can do things so she will be glad I live with her. Eliza said I could." Just then Edith's thoughts were interrupted by Mrs. Freeman's pleasant laugh.

"I do believe my little girl is 'wool-gathering,'" she said.

"What is 'wool-gathering'?" asked Edith, soberly.

"Oh, it is thinking of all sorts of things that may happen, or may not happen," answered Mrs. Freeman.

"Yes'm," said Edith. "Then I was 'wool-gathering' about you, but I can't tell you what about until the wool-gatherings happen."

"Well, I think I am very fortunate to

6 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

have a nice little girl come and live with me, especially now that I am all alone."

"Where is Eben?" asked Edith, for Eben was the man who had always looked after Captain Freeman's barns and taken care of the big black horse and the red Jersey cow.

"Oh, Eben has gone to the War, the same as my husband has," said Mrs. Freeman; "and you and I will have to take care of Black Betty and of Posy."

"Is 'Posy' the cow's name?" asked Edith.

"Yes; she eats so many clover blossoms she ought to be a posy, oughtn't she?" said Mrs. Freeman.

There was no house in sight from the Freemans'. The next neighbor lived nearly three miles away; but neither Mrs. Freeman nor Edith thought of being afraid, although it was just at the beginning of the Civil War, and there were many rumors that the Confederate soldiers intended to invade Illinois. But Mrs. Freeman was a coura-

geous woman and gave little thought to the numerous stories that seemed to have little foundation.

"I have to make butter this morning," said Mrs. Freeman, "and while I churn I want you to take this dish of corn out and feed the chickens; and just look and see if Black Betty is all right."

"Oh, yes'm," said Edith, and, taking the dish of corn, she went across the yard to the big hen-yard just beyond the barns. In the small field near the barns Posy was feeding, and Black Betty stood near the barn-yard fence.

"I guess Betty knows I have come here to live," thought the little girl, as Betty neighed and bent her handsome head to be petted.

Edith shook the corn about in the tin pan, and flung handfuls of it into the yard to the chickens, who scrambled after it eagerly. She tried to count them, but they chased each other about and got so mixed up that

8 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

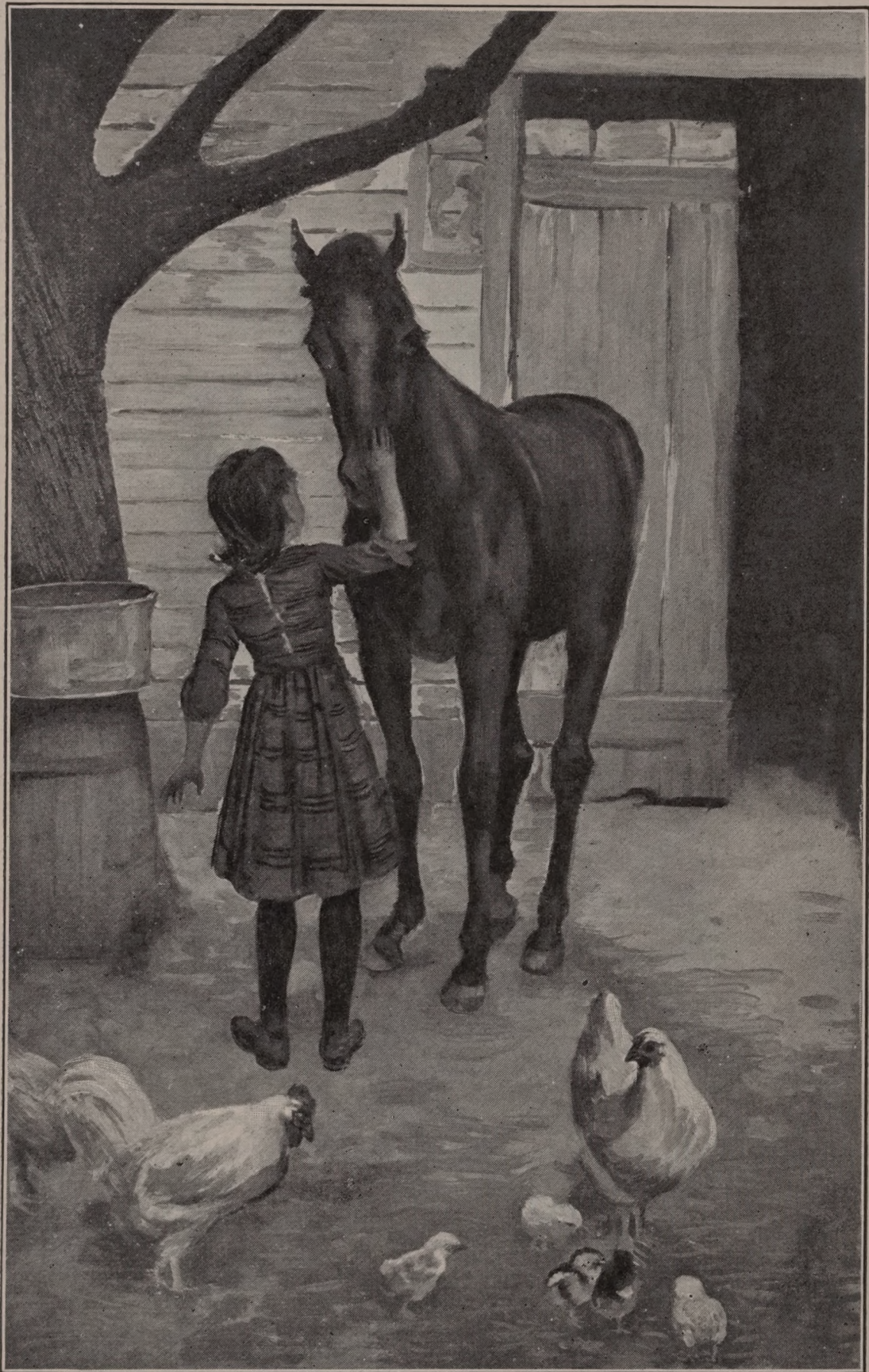
she gave it up, and began to think of Mrs. Freeman.

“I’m glad her hair is so wavy about her face,” thought Edith; “and I’m going to do everything I can so she will love me the same as mothers do. Perhaps I could save her life, or — or something. Anyway, it’s lucky I came here to live now Eben’s gone, because I can help her do things and be company.”

As Edith went toward the house she could hear the “chug, chug” of the churn-dasher as Mrs. Freeman worked vigorously, and in the distance she heard the rumble and creak of wheels. The little girl stopped to listen. Yes, it was surely the sound of a heavy wagon coming over the rough road, and she could hear some one singing.

“Mrs. Freeman!” she exclaimed, running into the kitchen. “I can hear wheels coming up the road and some one singing!”

“Can you, dearie? Well, I wouldn’t dare leave my churn just now, so you just run



"I GUESS BETTY KNOWS I HAVE COME HERE TO LIVE."

Page 7.

'round the corner of the house and see what you can see. Perhaps we're going to have company to dinner."

Edith ran around the house and looked down the road. She could see a big covered cart drawn by two oxen coming slowly along. A boy of not more than fourteen or fifteen years was on the front seat of the cart and was singing in a loud voice:—

"Hi Betty Martin, tiptoe fine,
She can't get a husband to suit her mind."

Edith watched the cart, and, as it approached, she could see sticking out from the sides the long muzzles of guns.

The boy stopped singing as his alert eyes caught sight of the little girl, and he turned toward the inside of the wagon and said: "Lie still, and make up your sleep. It's the house of a friend."

A muttered response seemed to come from the wagon.

"Hello!" called the boy, stopping his

10 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

team nearly in front of the house. "Who lives here?"

Edith could see that it was only a boy and that he had a freckled face and red hair, and some way her fright faded away.

"*I live here,*" she said boldly, determined to protect Mrs. Freeman. "What do you want?"

"Sho, now!" drawled the boy, leaning forward and looking smilingly down at the straight little figure in the blue gingham gown, and noting approvingly that she too had red hair and a freckled face. "Ain't we some pumpkins! Run into the house, little girl, and tell your father a gentleman wants to speak to him."

"You start right along," responded Edith. "I guess you don't want a dog set on you, do you?"

The boy laughed. "Do you s'pose I'm afraid of dogs?" he answered scornfully. "Why, what do you s'pose I've got in that wagon?"

"Guns," responded Edith, "and men asleep. I can see the guns, and I heard you tell the men to go to sleep. But I ain't scared of you," she continued bravely, "and you'd better start your oxen up, for soldiers live here."

"Soldiers!" exclaimed the boy, straightening up on the seat.

Edith nodded. "And like as not they'll take your old team away from you when they get home!"

The boy laughed and jumped to the ground. "I'll be gone when they get home, smarty," he said; and looking toward the wagon, he called out, "All right, men; take your guns and come on."

"Is it the enemy?" came the muffled response.

Edith stood shaking with terror. The boy turned and looked at her, and his laughing face grew sober.

"Don't be scared," he said; "there ain't a man in that wagon."

12 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

"I — I — heard them," said Edith. She was holding the tin pan in front of her like a shield, and looked at him accusingly.

"Come and look," said the boy. "Honest, there isn't a soul in the wagon. It's full of provisions, and those ain't guns, they're just smooth round pieces of wood painted black and stuck in under the cover. You just look." So Edith cautiously approached the wagon and peered in. Sure enough, not a man was to be seen. The wagon was closely packed with boxes and bags and barrels. And what Edith had taken for the barrels of guns were, as the boy had said, smooth round pieces of wood.

"I heard the men," she said, looking at him.

"That was me," replied the boy, grinning with delight. "I'm a ventriloquist."

"What's that?" asked Edith.

"Oh, it's talking like other people. A half-breed Indian taught me last summer."

Just then Mrs. Freeman came around the corner. She noticed the wagon with the protruding guns, and saw the boy standing near Edith, but she came smilingly forward.

The boy took off his hat as she approached. "I was telling your little girl about being a ventriloquist," he said. "And those ain't guns in my wagon, they are only make-believe. I've been to Alto Pass after provisions. My father has gone to the War," continued the boy, "and my mother and I live alone on the ranch; she was frightened to have me go alone, so I fixed up the wagon this way."

"Well," said Mrs. Freeman, "I should think you were a pretty smart boy. What is your name?"

"Hamilton Worthley," said the boy.

"Then I ought to know you," said Mrs. Freeman, "for I know your mother. Unyoke your oxen, Hamilton, and drive them around to the barn and feed them, and you come in and stay to dinner with us."

14 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

"I'd like to," said the boy, "but I mustn't stop; I've got six miles more to go, and I know mother is watching for me every minute. Oxen travel slow," he concluded, with his pleasant laugh, as he climbed back to his seat and started the team.

Mrs. Freeman and Edith watched him for a few minutes.

"That's what I call a real smart boy," said Mrs. Freeman.

"He's got red hair," said Edith.

"But not such pretty red hair as yours," responded Mrs. Freeman, "for his is just straight red hair, and yours is like shining gold," and she stroked the golden locks tenderly.

Edith sighed happily. "Oh," she said, "I hope Eliza won't ever want me to come and live with her."

Mrs. Freeman laughed. "Perhaps she won't. Anyway, you and I must see about dinner. My butter is all ready to work and is hard as can be."

“That boy thought I was your little girl, didn’t he?” said Edith.

“Well, so you are,” said Mrs. Freeman; “and some day we will hitch Black Betty into the wagon, and we will drive over and see the Worthleys.”

“And shall you tell the boy then that I am not your little girl?” asked Edith, a little wistfully.

Mrs. Freeman looked down into the up-turned face. “I shall tell them that I wish you were my own little girl, and that I love you just as much as if you were,” said the kind-hearted woman.

Edith was sure that this had been the happiest day of her life. When she went to bed, Mrs. Freeman said, “I have a plan for to-morrow for us to have a nice time,” and Edith went to sleep wondering what it could be.

She was up bright and early, and Mrs. Freeman had breakfast all ready when she came into the kitchen.

CHAPTER II

THE WALNUT GROVE

“**I** THINK that we must have a little celebration to-day,” said Mrs. Freeman, smilingly. “It is so bright and pleasant that we will be out of doors all we can. I know the nicest, shadiest place not a mile away, where we could go and stay all day, and where wild strawberries grow, not far from the big walnut grove where we can have our lunch.”

Edith listened eagerly to this delightful plan; and after all the chores were done, Mrs. Freeman went into the pantry and came out with two small baskets, one of which she handed to Edith.

“These baskets were made by the Indians,” she said as they walked across the yard past the barns and down toward a long

hay-shed, which could not be seen from the house.

“When we first lived here, long before we built this house,” said Mrs. Freeman, “a little party of Indians used to camp just where this hay-shed stands. The squaws would gather the sweet grass that grows here, and they made trips about the country, selling baskets to the farmers’ wives. They generally stayed here several weeks, and we were always glad enough to see the last of them.”

Edith looked at her basket more carefully, and noticed how skilfully it was made. It was woven of brown reeds with a pattern of blue and red grasses twisted around the top, a tight little cover fitted on smoothly, and there was a substantial handle.

“I guess there is something in my basket,” she said.

“Indeed there is; part of our celebration is in that basket, and part of the celebration

18 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

is in my basket," said Mrs. Freeman, smiling at Edith and swinging her basket.

"Now we mustn't forget to have a good time," she continued. "We must both think of all the pleasant things we can, and whenever we look at each other we must smile."

This made them both laugh, and they walked across the fields toward the walnut grove, swinging their baskets; and Edith was sure that she was the happiest girl in the entire State.

"I guess I don't know what a celebration is," she said as they walked along.

"Well," said Mrs. Freeman, "a celebration is usually a great affair. When some distinguished man, like the governor of a State, comes to visit a town, why then the people want to show how glad they are to see him, and they usually have a dinner for him and make speeches telling him how welcome he is; and they call that a celebration."

“And are you having this celebration because I have come to visit you?” asked Edith, a little shyly.

“That’s just exactly the reason,” replied Mrs. Freeman, “and at dinner I shall make a speech and tell you so; and then you will have to respond and say how happy you are to be here, and that you think this is one of the most delightful places, and these are the nicest people you ever saw.”

“That’s just what I do think,” said Edith.

“There, now our speeches are all made without waiting for dinner,” said Mrs. Freeman, “and we shall have more time to pick strawberries.”

They soon began to look for the fragrant berries, and Mrs. Freeman took two tin cups from her basket and gave one to Edith. “We will pick just these cups full to eat with our luncheon,” she said, “and then on our way home we can gather enough for tea.”

When the cups were filled, Mrs. Freeman

20 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

led the way toward the walnut grove, and they were both glad to sit down and rest.

“I have heard that fairies always like to live in the woods,” said Mrs. Freeman, with a smiling nod; “and if you will sit just here, Edith,” pointing to some smooth grass close beside her, “I will tell you all about fairies and about a Prince Tinkletoes, who very likely lived right in this grove.”

Edith sat down very near to Mrs. Freeman and listened eagerly.

“Fairies, you know,” began Mrs. Freeman, “are little people about as big as my thumb, and there are wise folks who say that there are no such things as fairies, so everybody has to decide about it for himself. But on celebrations it is an excellent plan to make believe that there are good fairies everywhere, doing all sorts of pleasant things for everybody; and this Prince Tinkletoes was the very best fairy possible. He wanted to make everybody happy, and he wanted to whisper to grown-

up people whenever he saw them, to tell them of nice things that they could do for children and for old people. The reason that he was called Tinkletoes was that on each one of his tiny toes was a tiny bell, hardly larger than a pinhead, and as he tripped about they made the sweetest, faintest music; and only people who believed in fairies could hear it.

“Well, one day Prince Tinkletoes said to himself, ‘I must go up to the Freemans’ and see what’s going on.’ So he called up a big yellow butterfly and sat down comfortably on its back, for Prince Tinkletoes was not much larger than a good-sized fly, and he said, ‘Go straight to the Freeman house.’ When he arrived I was taking a nap, but he perched on my ear and he began to whisper, and the little bells on his toes made such a silvery whisper that I listened.”

“What did he say?” questioned Edith, leaning toward Mrs. Freeman.

“He whispered about you,” said Mrs.

22 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

Freeman. "He told me how pretty your hair was, and how much I would enjoy having you make me a visit; and he said that you would like to come."

"How did he know?" asked Edith.

"Fairies know everything," said Mrs. Freeman, "at least good fairies like Tinkletoes do; and if you ever hear a silvery little tinkle, and then a little whisper comes to you to do something kind for some one, you can know that it is Prince Tinkletoes."

"I'm glad he whispered to you about me," said Edith, "because he might have whispered about some other little girl."

"Why, I am glad, too," said Mrs. Freeman. "Now we must open our baskets and spread out our luncheon." There were nice little biscuits, a bottle of milk, and some sugar cookies, and with the fresh strawberries Edith declared that it was the nicest lunch she had ever eaten.

"I begin to feel like a little girl myself," said Mrs. Freeman. "How would you like

a game of hide-and-seek? I'll stand with my face close to this tree and you hide and then I'll find you."

So Edith tiptoed carefully around one or two trees, then ran a little way, and then called "Coo-ee, coo-ee," making her voice sound as far off as possible; and in a moment she saw Mrs. Freeman looking about here and there, but never in the right place, until Edith's laugh sent her running in the right direction and Edith was caught fast.

After a while they tired of running about and were glad to rest under the big tree where they had eaten their lunch. Then they started for home, picking strawberries along the way.

"It's been a lovely celebration," said Edith when they reached home, "and I shall remember about my good fairy, Prince Tinkletoes."

That evening, as they sat together, Mrs. Freeman told Edith about the little log cabin that had been her home when they

24 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

first came to live in Illinois. "It had only two rooms," she said, "but they were such pleasant rooms. The house stood just where this one stands, and I had to be alone a great deal then, for Captain Freeman was away looking for mines."

"Were you ever afraid?" asked Edith.

"No, I don't think that I was afraid, but I was often lonely. We had a collie dog named Bounce, who was company as well as a protector. He would not let any one come near the house unless I said so. Do you want me to tell you a funny story about Bounce?"

"Yes, indeed," said Edith.

"Well, he didn't like other dogs very well, and when now and then one would go by the house, following a wagon, Bounce would bark and bark at it; and when we had visitors who brought a dog with them, Bounce would act as unhappy as possible. He would not make friends with any visiting dog, but would sulk about all day. One

morning Bounce was missing for several hours, and when he came back he acted in such a queer manner that I was worried. He would take hold of my skirt and try to draw me toward the road, then he would run down the road a little way and bark; and at last I made up my mind to follow him. I followed him nearly a mile down the road, and what do you suppose I found?"

Edith shook her head. "It wasn't a little girl, was it?" she asked eagerly.

"No, it wasn't a little girl, but close beside an old log near the road lay a dog, and such a pitiful-looking creature as it was. It was evidently tired out and hungry, for when it stood up it trembled all over. It wagged its tail in the most friendly way when Bounce went jumping about it. Well, I came home again and carried the poor thing some food and water, and in a little while it crept slowly along the road and followed Bounce into the yard. After that

26 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

Bounce devoted himself to his new friend, sharing every bone with him and giving up his own sunny place near the corner of the house to the new dog, which gradually gained in flesh and strength and came to be a very good-looking dog. It followed Bounce's example about barking, and tagged Bounce everywhere. I think it was a very old dog, however, as it only lived a year after Bounce adopted it."

"Where is Bounce?" asked Edith.

"Bounce lived out his days very happily right here," replied Mrs. Freeman. "But I often wonder how a dog knew enough to go to the rescue of another dog, and to help him to a good home."

"I know," said Edith. "Prince Tinkles whispered in Bounce's ear."

"Perhaps he did," responded Mrs. Freeman, with a little laugh.

CHAPTER III

A TRIP TO THE CORNERS

THE morning after the celebration Mrs. Freeman came into Edith's room just as the little girl opened her eyes.

"Well," she said, leaning over and kissing her good morning, "I wonder what we can do to-day? Can my little girl make up her own bed after breakfast?"

"Yes, indeed," said Edith. "I can make it up just as smooth," for she was afraid that Mrs. Freeman might think she would be a trouble to her. "I always comb my hair, and I helped Eliza a lot."

Edith sat up in bed and looked at Mrs. Freeman, who was smiling down on her.

"Then jump right up," said Mrs. Freeman. "There is a nice pitcherful of cold water on the washstand, and as soon as

28 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

you are ready, come down to breakfast. I've got something nice for you."

Edith wondered what was waiting for her, and hurried through her bath and brushed her hair as quickly as possible, and ran downstairs into the big kitchen.

The little round table was drawn up between the two open windows. Before each plate stood a covered dish, and in the centre of the table was a glass tumbler with a beautiful purple iris in it.

"Sit down, my dear, and shut your eyes till I say ready," said Mrs. Freeman.

So Edith sat down at the table and shut her eyes very tight. She heard a little rattle of plates and then Mrs. Freeman said "Ready!" and she opened her eyes.

"Oh, my!" said Edith, for standing on the table right in front of her was a gingerbread girl with currants for eyes, a raisin for a nose, and a piece of citron for a mouth.

"But that is not to be eaten until we

have finished our eggs and toast," said Mrs. Freeman.

"Oh, I shan't want to eat it," said Edith. "Why, it looks like a doll, doesn't it?"

"Pity sakes, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Freeman, "didn't you ever see a doll?"

"Not a real, truly doll," answered Edith. "When I was a little girl I had a little shawl all tied up so that it was 'most as good as a doll. I called it Grace. I guess I shall call this one Grace."

"Pity sakes!" said Mrs. Freeman. "Why, you must have a doll the first thing, a real china doll, but I shall have to send for it, and like as not it won't get here for a week or two, and what will you do till then?"

"Why, I'll have this one," said Edith.

"No," said Mrs. Freeman, "that is for you to eat. If you try to keep it, it will get all crumbly, so bite off its head and see if it isn't sweet."

Edith bit off the gingerbread doll's head,

30 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

and forgot that she had ever wanted to keep it.

“Oh, dear,” said Mrs. Freeman after breakfast. “My poor vegetables need weeding and watering. I don’t know what we will do for garden stuff later on, for there is not a man to be had; every one has gone to the War.”

“What is the War?” asked Edith.

“It’s a misfortune, my dear, as I look at it,” said Mrs. Freeman, “but like all troubles, it must be borne bravely; and my part of it seems to be to try and keep this place in good condition, so I’m going out to weed the vegetables this morning, and you can help me, and this afternoon we will see what we can do about a doll.”

Mrs. Freeman’s vegetable garden was just back of the house. There were rows of cabbages and turnips; young beets grew thickly, so that Mrs. Freeman said they must be thinned out for greens. Green peas and string beans were sending up their

tender growths, and carrots and onions were well started. In a distant corner there was a row of currant bushes, and behind these was the herb garden, where grew pennyroyal, thyme, and sage, and where a hop vine climbed up a strong pole set there for its convenience.

Beyond the herb garden was a potato patch, and Mrs. Freeman looked at this rather anxiously; but this morning she thinned out the beet bed, weeded among the carrots and onions, and sent Edith back and forth from garden to hen-yard with a basket filled with weeds for the chickens. As Edith went back and forth she could see Black Betty feeding, and thought how glossy and fat the big horse was.

"Betty is real fat, isn't she?" she said as she and Mrs. Freeman walked toward the house.

Mrs. Freeman stopped and looked at the black horse. "Betty needs exercise," she answered, "and I tell you just what

32 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

we will do. We will drive to The Corners this very afternoon. It is only four miles, and perhaps I may get a letter from John or hear some news; and who knows but that the storekeeper may have a doll for sale?" and she smiled down at Edith's eager face.

Edith gave a little skip, and said, "For me?"

"Yes, indeed. And if he has a doll, why, I suppose we shall have to make clothes for it, and in my closet is a piece-bag, and in that piece-bag are bits of ribbon and muslin, and perhaps of silk. And as soon as we get the doll we'll make her the most beautiful clothes! I hope you brought your thimble, Edith."

"I never had a thimble," said Edith.

"Then you must have one this very day," said Mrs. Freeman. "I see that we must surely go to The Corners."

Early that afternoon Black Betty was hitched to the covered buggy, and Mrs. Freeman and Edith started on their ex-

pedition. Betty felt rather frisky, and Edith had never ridden so rapidly. But she enjoyed watching the fine horse, and when she looked at Mrs. Freeman she smiled happily, and thought to herself that no one could be lovelier than Mrs. Freeman. She thought how pretty Mrs. Freeman's fresh calico dress was, and was very glad that she had worn her own white knit cotton stockings, for she could see glimpses of Mrs. Freeman's white knit stockings below the hem of the pretty calico.

The Corners was a dull little settlement situated at a cross-roads. There was a long, rambling, shed-like building which served for a store, and where the post-office was located. Then there were two other buildings—a blacksmith shop, and a school-house, and one or two unpainted houses.

Mrs. Freeman had several small purchases to make, and when she asked the store-keeper if he had such a thing as a doll, Edith held her breath in suspense.

34 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

“Why, yes, I b’lieve there’s a couple somewheres around,” answered the storekeeper, and after a search through a number of boxes he brought out two dolls wrapped in white tissue paper. When he unrolled them and held them up, Edith thought that she had never seen anything so lovely.

The dolls were of the same size. One had black painted ringlets on its china head, and black eyes and a smiling red mouth and beautiful red cheeks. The other had yellow ringlets and blue eyes and a smiling pink mouth and pink cheeks.

“Which do you like best?” asked Mrs. Freeman, taking up the doll with the yellow hair.

“I don’t know,” said Edith, softly, “but I guess I like the black-haired one best.”

“Then the black-haired one is yours,” said Mrs. Freeman, “and you can carry it home instead of having it wrapped up, if you want to.”



“ AND OUR FLAG MEANS MORE THAN THAT ; IT MEANS FREEDOM.”

Page 35.

"Oh, yes," said Edith, taking up the doll carefully.

"We must not forget the thimble," said Mrs. Freeman, and the storekeeper took out a box of bright steel thimbles and found one that just fitted Edith's second finger.

Mrs. Freeman was disappointed because there was no letter from Captain Freeman. The storekeeper had no news of the army. "But I keep the Union flag flying," he said, "and I shall as long as I have a flagpole."

"That's right," said Mrs. Freeman.

When they were ready to start for home, Edith looked up at the flag which waved from the top of a tall pole near the store. "What is a flag for?" she asked.

"To remind us that all men are brothers," said Mrs. Freeman. "And our flag," she added, with a little tremor in her voice, "means more than that; it means freedom."

"Oh!" said Edith, a little puzzled, and thinking more about the wonderful new doll and the bright thimble than of anything else.

36 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

"Some day we must ask Mrs. Jones to bring her little girls over to see us," said Mrs. Freeman. "They are twins, Kitty and Puss, and they look exactly alike."

"Are they little girls?" asked Edith.

"Not quite as large as you are," replied Mrs. Freeman, "and about a year younger."

"I hope they will come soon," said Edith. "I guess Prince Tinkletoes whispered to you about little girls, didn't he?"

"What makes you think so?" questioned Mrs. Freeman, smilingly.

"Because I have always wished that I could have a doll and some little girls to play with," answered Edith, "and now you have given me the doll and thought about two little girls."

"Of course I have," responded Mrs. Freeman. "That is, of course it really was Prince Tinkletoes who thought to remind me that Kitty and Puss would be so glad to have a nice little girl to play with."

Edith smiled happily at this, and wished

that Eliza could know how many pleasant things were happening to her.

When they reached home and drove into the yard, Mrs. Freeman exclaimed:—

“There! What do you suppose I have done? Our front door has a spring lock, and I went away and left my keys inside. Here we are locked out of house and home!”

“Can’t I climb in a window?” asked Edith.

“I carefully fastened every window,” replied Mrs. Freeman, “but we can put the ladder up to the shed-chamber window. Would you dare go up a ladder?”

“Yes, indeed,” said Edith. “I’ll put Grace on the porch.”

A long ladder was in the shed, and Mrs. Freeman and Edith had soon raised it against the chamber window, and Edith climbed bravely up. The window was open, and she crawled carefully through, and soon ran downstairs and opened the back door.

“What would I have done if I had been

38 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

alone!" said Mrs. Freeman. "I never could have squeezed through that window. I think I am very lucky to have such a brave little girl."

Edith flushed happily. "Perhaps sometime I can do something really brave to help you," she said.

"Well," said Mrs. Freeman, "I call it really brave to go up that ladder. Now we must fly around and do our chores. I wish we had a nice likely kitten; I believe you would like a kitten, wouldn't you, Edith?"

"Oh, yes!" said Edith.

The piece-bag about which Mrs. Freeman had told Edith was brought out the next day and was found to contain enough blue-sprigged muslin to make Grace a dress. Then there were some pieces of white cambric that were just right for underclothes.

"I will cut out some patterns for Grace's clothes," said Mrs. Freeman, "and then you can cut out the dress and skirts yourself."

Keep the patterns so that you can make Grace a new gown at any time. We will take our work out on the back porch, for I want to keep an eye on my chickens. One disappeared last night."

Edith was too much interested in the patterns and the pretty pieces of muslin, silk, and cambric, to think much about the chickens.

"While you are busy with Grace I will just run out and see how my goslings are getting on," said Mrs. Freeman. She was gone only a few minutes and returned with something carefully wrapped in her apron. It was a sick gosling. "We shall have to keep this one in the house for a while," she said, and Edith left her doll long enough to watch Mrs. Freeman make a soft nest of warm cotton batting in an old basket which she put in the sunny window.

"Perhaps a tame gosling will be as good as a kitten," Mrs. Freeman said, as they went back to the porch. "We will see if

40 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

we can't teach it to grow into an accomplished and polite goose."

While Edith was busy cutting out and basting the doll's clothes, Mrs. Freeman was at work on some bits of light blue silk, and in a little while she exclaimed: "Look at this, Edith! Isn't this a beautiful hat?"

"Yes, indeed," said Edith, admiringly, for out of the bits of silk Mrs. Freeman had shirred and shaped the daintiest of doll's hats.

When they went in to prepare dinner, Mrs. Freeman fed the gosling with some warm porridge.

"Perhaps he'd like sugar and cream on it," suggested Edith.

"Perhaps he would," responded Mrs. Freeman, laughingly; "let's try and see," and she sprinkled a little sugar over it and added a little cream, feeding the gosling slowly. At the new flavor the gosling moved its head hopefully and quacked several times as if to say "Thank you." It moved

briskly about in its basket, and seemed much better than in the morning. Edith became so much interested in watching it that she put Grace and the piece-bag away.

“If it is to grow into a polite goose, it must be taught how to eat properly,” said Mrs. Freeman, and she put a chair near a low table in one corner of the kitchen, and when it was time to feed the gosling again it was put in the chair and the shallow basin of porridge set on the table in front of it. After a few surprised flutters the gosling began to peck at the porridge. Evidently it did not suit his taste. Mrs. Freeman added the cream and sugar as she had done at noon, and then Master Gosling fell to with a good will.

At night he was warmly wrapped in the cotton and seemed almost as well as usual. For several days he was kept in the house and tended carefully. He would stay in almost any position in which he was placed. Mrs. Freeman would put him flat on his

42 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

back in a sunny corner of the piazza, where he would lie for a long time, greatly to Edith's amusement. As he grew stronger he greatly preferred the house to the company of his brothers and sisters, and at the usual times of feeding he would waddle into the kitchen, flutter up to his seat in the chair, and quack for his porridge. But cream and sugar always had to be added.

One day, as the bird lay on its back in the sun, Edith put Grace so that the gosling's wing almost enfolded the doll. He did not object, and as he grew larger Edith began to dress him up in a skirt, with a little square of calico folded shawl-fashion about his neck, and a paper sunbonnet. Edith would reward Robin Goodfellow, as Mrs Freeman named him, with a bit of sweet gingerbread, of which he was very fond, so that the young goose quite approved of appearing in costume. Then Edith made some ribbon reins and a sort of harness for Robin Goodfellow, and a small cart made out of a paste-

board box with empty spools for wheels, and he would draw it about the yard as if proud of his accomplishments.

For a long time he persisted in being fed in the kitchen and spending his nights on the porch, but as he grew older, for his safety Mrs. Freeman insisted on carrying him out to lodge with his own family, and gradually Robin Goodfellow became tired of being harnessed, of lying on his back, or even of eating in the kitchen, and forgot his accomplishments and became just a common goose, greatly to Edith's disappointment.

"A kitten wouldn't do that way," she said; "even after they grow into cats they like to play and they will do tricks." And Mrs. Freeman said again that she must try to find a good, likely kitten.

CHAPTER IV

BLACK BETTY RUNS AWAY

“DON’T you want to send a letter to your sister, Edith?” asked Mrs. Freeman one morning.

“Oh, yes’m,” replied Edith, eagerly. “Will you write and tell her all about my doll, and about the white iris in the garden, and say that I have a thimble, and tell her about Robin Goodfellow?”

Mrs. Freeman laughed at the little girl’s eagerness. “Why, I will write if you want me to,” she replied; “but don’t you think that it would be nicer if you wrote yourself?”

The smile faded from Edith’s face. “Yes’m,” she answered, “it would be nicer; but I guess when you asked me to come and live with you that you didn’t know that I couldn’t write.”

They were both at work in the potato patch. Mrs. Freeman was hoeing about the plants, and Edith was pulling up the witch-grass which grew so rapidly. Mrs. Freeman pushed back her wide sunbonnet and looked toward her companion, but Edith's eyes were fixed on the ground, and all Mrs. Freeman could see was the top of the little girl's "shaker" with its cape of blue gingham.

"Can't you write, my dear?" she asked.

"No, ma'am," came Edith's faint reply, and she ventured to look up and, as Mrs. Freeman was smiling, she smiled up into the friendly face.

"Don't you care?" asked the little girl. "I thought p'r'aps you'd think I was so ignorant you wouldn't want me to live with you when you knew that I couldn't write."

"Can you read?" asked Mrs. Freeman.

"Oh, yes'm, easy words I can. Eliza always was meaning to teach me to write, but either she didn't have time or didn't

46 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

have a pencil. When she had time there wouldn't be a pencil in the house, and then when we did have a pencil she wouldn't have a bit of time."

"I see," said Mrs. Freeman. "Well, you are old enough now to understand that it is important to write, and there's no time like the present to learn, so just as soon as we finish this row of potatoes we will go into the house and get ready for a writing lesson."

"Have you a pencil?" asked Edith, anxiously.

"I have a whole dozen," said Mrs. Freeman; "and I expect that you will learn so quickly that it will not be long before we can send that letter to Eliza."

"And tell her that I am learning to sew, too!" said Edith.

"Of course," said Mrs. Freeman.

"Eliza said I'd have a real good chance to learn things with you," said the little girl, "and she said that I must be a credit to you."

“Well,” said Mrs. Freeman, with the gay little laugh which Edith liked so much to hear, “when you write to Eliza, you must tell her that I think you are better than a credit to me; you are like a gift to me.”

“Is a gift better than a credit?” asked Edith.

“Indeed it is. A gift means love, and thought, and kindness, and a credit, — well, I guess I don’t know what a credit does mean,” concluded Mrs. Freeman, “only I know that a gift is much nicer.”

Edith smiled happily. “Then I’ll be a gift to you,” she said.

On their way back to the house from the potato patch they stopped to gather up the eggs in the big, clean hen-barn. Mrs. Freeman said that her hens were her best income. “Just see, thirty eggs this morning!” and she lifted Edith’s basket and looked admiringly at the big, cream-colored eggs. “I shall have to go to The Corners early next week to sell my eggs.”

48 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

"You can count, too, can't you!" said Edith.

"Yes, indeedy! Can't you?" asked Mrs. Freeman.

Edith shook her head.

"I see I shall have to start a school," said Mrs. Freeman, "and I shall call it the 'Edith Austin Academy.' Instruction will be given in arithmetic, writing, geography, grammar, also in weeding, picking peas, gathering eggs, and feeding chickens. Extra courses in dish-washing and sewing."

Edith laughed, and the anxious look faded from her face as she listened to her friend. "Shall I learn all those things?"

"Of course you will, and we will begin the summer term this very afternoon. The daily session will be a short one, for busy days are coming. Do you see the tall grass in the lower field? Somehow that must be cut and got into the barn, or Posy will go hungry next winter. And that piece of oats

must be harvested, or Betty and the chickens will starve."

"Can you harvest?" asked Edith.

"I'm afraid I can't, my dear, for I've nothing but a scythe, and I should be apt to cut my feet off if I attempted to use it. John thought he would be home before this time, and Eben, too; but I'm afraid that the War is just begun."

"The War won't come here, will it?" asked Edith.

"Oh, no; Illinois hasn't any slaves to free, thank Heaven," said Mrs. Freeman. "But I must think of some way to get my grain and hay harvested."

"Couldn't that smart Worthley boy do it for you?" asked Edith.

"Why, I hadn't thought of him," said Mrs. Freeman. "Perhaps he has a harvester, and I could help him. Perhaps that's a good idea. After the 'Edith Austin Academy' closes this afternoon, we will drive over to Mrs. Worthley's and talk to her about it."

50 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

The "Edith Austin Academy" had its first session on the front piazza that afternoon, and Edith carefully copied the letters Mrs. Freeman made for her on the big sheet of brown wrapping paper, and added up the potato balls which were placed in a row on the little table which served as a desk. She could count ten before the first lesson concluded; and, although writing seemed much more difficult than counting, she was sure that it would not be many weeks before she could send a letter to Eliza.

"I must learn as fast as I can," thought Edith, as she ran happily upstairs to put on her white stockings and get ready to visit Mrs. Worthley, "for it won't be fair to Mrs. Freeman if I don't learn everything there is *to* learn. Because I must be a credit to her just as soon as I can," and Edith smiled, remembering what Mrs. Freeman had said about "gifts" and "credits."

"I don't know that we ought to start," said Mrs. Freeman when Edith came downstairs.

"There are dark clouds gathering in the west, and we may have a thunder storm, and there isn't a house on the road where we could get shelter."

"Betty is all harnessed," said Edith.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Freeman, "and perhaps we could go and get home before the rain comes, and perhaps there won't be any rain; I believe we will take the chances, anyway, for I must find out as soon as possible about getting help to harvest the grain."

The broad prairie with its tall grasses offers no shelter from a storm. There were few trees in the vicinity, only those planted by settlers about their homesteads; and the road over which Mrs. Freeman and Edith were driving was so little used as to be hardly more than a cart-track through the grass.

As Black Betty travelled swiftly along Mrs. Freeman told Edith about the time when she and Captain Freeman came to Illinois. "Captain Freeman was looking for coal mines then," she said. "He opened

52 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

the first coal mines in Illinois. He was a member of General McClernard's staff. We used to call this part of the State 'Egypt.' Do you know the story about Joseph, in the Bible? that there was still corn in Egypt when it failed everywhere else? Well, that's the way it was here one year. The corn crop failed throughout the rest of the State, but down in this end of the State there was plenty of corn; and the drivers of caravans of prairie schooners, headed thither and returning laden, got to thinking of their Bibles, and called this fertile land by the name of the land where Jacob sent his sons to save them from the famine."

"It's growing dark," said Edith, peering out of the covered buggy.

"Dark as Egypt," said Mrs. Freeman. "I'm afraid the rain will catch us after all," and she urged Black Betty to a faster pace.

The wind began to come in puffs, and now and then a dash of rain swept across their faces. The sky was dark, and clouds

covered the sun. But Betty was making good time, and Mrs. Freeman hoped to reach the Worthleys' before the storm reached them. Betty, usually calm and steady, began to show that she, too, was nervous. She twitched her head, lifted her feet high, and swerved from the road as if to turn about and go towards home. It took all Mrs. Freeman's strength to control her and keep her to the road.

The wind grew stronger and rocked the frail carriage, as it swept across the prairie. One of the side curtains of the buggy broke loose and flapped violently, making a loud, clapping noise. This proved too much for Betty, and with a violent pull of her head which yanked the reins from Mrs. Freeman's grasp, Betty turned from the road and began a wild rush across the open prairie, the carriage swinging and swaying behind her. The rain was now coming in torrents, the sky was dark, and the wind was apparently growing in strength.

54 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

For a moment Mrs. Freeman lost her presence of mind, but a glance at Edith's frightened face reminded her of her own responsibility.

"Don't be frightened, dear child," she said, with a little smile, "we will soon be all right. If I could only get those reins, I could control Betty in a moment, and this shower is too fierce to last long."

The reins were striking against Betty at every jump, swaying at one side, and there was danger that the horse's feet might get caught in them. Edith remembered how she had promised to herself that she would some day do some brave thing for Mrs. Freeman. It would be a brave thing if she could get those reins. A sudden resolve took possession of the little girl. She slid off the seat to the floor of the buggy, and crouched near the dashboard. How Betty did run! How the buggy jolted! Edith took a firm hold of the nickel rail at the side of the dashboard, and, before Mrs. Freeman

had realized the child's movement, she had stepped carefully out on the shaft and, leaning down, clutched at the swinging reins. By wonderful good fortune the little girl's hand seized the flying reins; she held on to them firmly, and just then felt a grasp upon her skirts, and Mrs. Freeman drew her back into the swaying carriage and seized the reins from her hand.

"Thank Heaven!" said Mrs. Freeman, as Edith sank in a limp heap at the bottom of the carriage.

Mrs. Freeman, with the reins again in her hands, soon brought Betty to a standstill. The clouds began to disperse, the rain stopped, and the wind died away. The storm was over. Mrs. Freeman turned Betty back to the road, and now found time to speak to Edith, who was back in her seat, sitting very straight and looking very happy.

"Edith," said Mrs. Freeman, "what made you think of taking such a dreadful risk as

that? You might have slipped and been run over."

"Oh, I couldn't slip," said Edith; "I had a tight hold."

"But what made you do it, child?"

"I wanted to do something for you," said Edith, a little tremble in her voice; "and I've got black all over my white stockings."

CHAPTER V

EDITH AND HAMILTON

WHEN they drove into the Worthleys' yard, Hamilton and his mother hurried out to meet them. Hamilton smiled at Edith as he helped her out of the carriage. "You're pretty brave, for a girl," he said, remembering their first meeting.

"Brave!" said Mrs. Freeman, "I guess if you could have seen her an hour ago you would have thought she was brave," and Mrs. Freeman told the story of the recapture of the reins.

Hamilton listened without a word of comment, but Mrs. Worthley exclaimed: "Well, that beats all! I expect if Edith lives to grow up she will be a real heroine!"

Edith did not know what "heroine" meant, but she was sure it was something

very desirable from the way in which Mrs. Worthley spoke, and she resolved to herself that she would be a heroine if she possibly could.

Hamilton unhitched Betty and led her toward the stable, and Edith and Mrs. Freeman went indoors with his mother. The Worthley house was not as large as Mrs. Freeman's; the rooms were all on the ground floor.

"Just step into my shed-room a minute," said Mrs. Worthley. "I want you to see a rag carpet I'm weaving. I cut up my rags and had them all sewed before the War started, or I guess I shouldn't have had courage to begin it."

The shed-room was a long, unfinished room with windows on each side. The floor was unpainted, and there was but little furniture. At the end of the room stood the big, clumsy, wooden loom, with a length of bright-colored carpet in its frame; and on a chair right under one of the sunny windows

was a big round basket, and in this basket Edith saw a smooth maltese cat, and curled up beside it were two maltese kittens.

“Oh!” exclaimed Edith, admiringly, and when Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Worthley looked around, she said “Kittens!” in such a delighted voice that they both laughed.

“Now, perhaps you would like a nice kitten?” said Mrs. Worthley, hopefully.

“Indeed I would,” replied Mrs. Freeman.

“Well, Edith, you can have one of those kittens and welcome,” said Mrs. Worthley. “I will fix a nice box to put it in, and you can take it home to-day. Remember that it likes its milk warmed a little.”

The kitten which Edith decided on had a little white spot on its forehead and its feet were white. “I know what I’m going to name it,” said Edith. “I am going to name it Tinkletoes.”

“Why,” said Mrs. Freeman, “I think that is a fine name.”

While Edith was playing with the kittens

60 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

she heard Mrs. Worthley say: "I keep hearing reports that some of our Illinois soldiers are not to be trusted, and that one regiment is going over to the Confederacy. But I can't believe it."

"You mustn't believe it," responded Mrs. Freeman, seriously. "Some deserter from the army has started that story. Why, if it was true, our homes would not be safe for a minute. The Southern army would pour into the State and destroy the home of every loyal citizen."

Edith was listening eagerly. The War had seemed something vague and far off until she came to live with Mrs. Freeman. Now it seemed to be coming nearer every day. It was because of the War that Mrs. Freeman had to live alone and run the farm as best she could; and now Edith began to have a terror of the word *Confederate*. She felt that for Illinois people to join the Confederacy was, in some unimagined way, a disgrace.

"I haven't heard a word from the Captain," Mrs. Freeman went on more cheerfully, "but 'no news is good news,' you know; and just now I am anxious about getting in my oats and harvesting my wheat, and I came over to see if that smart boy of yours could help me out."

Mrs. Worthley smiled at this praise of her boy. "Why, I guess he could help some," she said. "He and I have managed to gather our own crops. I guess we have need to store all we can, Mrs. Freeman, for it will be a hard winter."

Mrs. Freeman nodded. "Edith and I have a fine garden," she responded. "We shall have plenty of potatoes, carrots, and onions for our needs this winter; but I want to make sure of enough feed for Betty and the cow."

Edith picked Tinkletoes up in her arms and went out of the shed-room and across the yard to the stable. Hamilton sat in the door, cleaning Betty's harness.

62 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

"See! your mother has given me this lovely kitten," called Edith.

Just then the little girl heard some one call, "Edith, Edith Austin!"

Edith looked anxiously toward the house, and the voice sounded again, "Come right into the house."

Edith started to obey, but Hamilton's laugh made her look at him wonderingly.

"I guess you've forgotten about my being a ventriloquist," he said.

"Oh!" said Edith, admiringly. "I wish that I could be a ven-tril-o-quist. Couldn't I learn?"

Hamilton shook his head. "I guess it wouldn't be of much use for you to learn," he said. "Now with a boy it's different. If Confederates or deserters come along here, why, I could talk like half a dozen men and frighten them off."

"Then I ought to learn right away," said Edith, eagerly; "for if I knew how, then I could frighten off people if they came to

hurt Mrs. Freeman. Don't you suppose I could learn?"

"Can you sing?"

"I don't know."

"Well, try; sing 'Hi, Betty Martin,'" and Hamilton looked at her critically.

But Edith had not a singing voice. Her "Hi, Betty Martin," sounded in a weak quaver which made Hamilton laugh. "You can't!" he said, shaking his head. "You haven't voice enough."

"Oh, dear," said Edith, almost in tears, "then what can I do if Confederates come?"

"Well," said Hamilton, thoughtfully, "probably they won't come; but if they should, you'd better ride Black Betty over here just as fast as you can, and I'll go and scare them off."

"Oh, thank you," said Edith, gratefully.

Tinkletoes began to get uneasy in Edith's close clasp, and the children went back to the house together.

It was arranged that Hamilton should go

to the Freeman farm the next Monday with his reaping machine, and harvest Mrs. Freeman's grain and help her to get in as much hay as possible. When he led Betty up to the door, Mrs. Freeman exclaimed at the shining harness, and Mrs. Worthley said: "Well, you never saw such a boy! He's busy at something every minute, and always wants to help everybody."

"Why, that's just like Edith," said Mrs. Freeman, smiling down at the little girl beside her. Edith smiled happily back, and resolved to herself that after this she would keep Betty's harness as clean and shiny as Hamilton could.

"To-morrow we must go over to The Corners and see if there isn't a letter," said Mrs. Freeman, as they started for home.

"And see if the storekeeper keeps his flag flying," said Edith.

"Mr. Jones is sure to do that, poor man," said Mrs. Freeman. "If he was not lame, he would be at the front with Captain Freeman."

But as long as he has to stay at home he shows his loyalty by keeping the flag flying on the highest point in his neighborhood. I always feel safe when I think of Mr. Jones's flag."

It was nearly dark before they reached home. Tinkletoes was glad enough to be taken out of his comfortable box, and was glad of the saucer of warm milk that Edith soon had ready for him.

"I know what we must do just as soon as we can," said Mrs. Freeman.

"What?" asked Edith, eagerly, for Mrs. Freeman's plans were always pleasant ones.

"Can't you guess?" asked Mrs. Freeman. "When a little girl has only one pair of white stockings, why, what should she do?"

"Knit another pair," said Edith.

"Of course," said Mrs. Freeman; "and I have plenty of white cotton yarn and nice steel knitting needles, and I think I shall add a course of stocking-knitting to the 'Edith Austin Academy.'"

“Oh! what a lot of lovely things to do!” said Edith, happily.

Mrs. Freeman decided next morning to ride Betty over to The Corners.

“I can go faster on horseback,” she said. “You won’t be afraid to stay alone?”

“Oh, no!” said Edith. “And you won’t be away long?”

“No longer than I can help,” replied Mrs. Freeman.

Edith took her doll, Grace, and went out on the front piazza where she could watch the road over which Mrs. Freeman would return. Grace had just been established on the front steps, and Edith was coming to make a formal call upon her, when the pounding of a horse’s feet down the road attracted the little girl’s attention and made her look in that direction.

“Oh, how quick she’s come home!” exclaimed Edith, thinking that it was Mrs. Freeman. But as she looked she could see that it was a gray horse, and not Black



“ARE YOUR FOLKS AT HOME, LITTLE GIRL?” — *Page 67.*

Betty, and a man in a blue uniform with brass buttons was its rider.

Edith watched him as he rapidly drew near, and as he stopped the gray horse in front of the house, and swung himself from the saddle, she did not run or show any signs of fear. But she was wondering if this strange man meant harm to the Freemans or their property.

As the man stood beside the horse, the little girl noticed that he was not very tall, and that he was thin. The blue uniform seemed to hang from his shoulders as from a framework. He wore a faded soldier's cap, and his sandy hair was long.

"Are your folks at home, little girl?" he asked, looking anxiously about.

"Not all of them," answered Edith, "but I'm at home, and Grace is here."

"Well," said the man, and he leaned against the horse as if too weak to stand, "I'm just about used up. Could I give my horse a drink and rest off here a couple of

68 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

hours? I'm on my way to Cairo," he explained.

"Why, yes, sir," said Edith. "You lead your horse round to the pump in the back yard. And if you'd like a lunch I'll bring you something on the back porch, where it's shady."

The young man looked at her gratefully. "I ain't had much to eat lately," he said. When he reached the back yard he unsaddled the tired-looking horse, took off his bridle, and pumped a bucket full of fresh water. Then he stretched himself out at full length in the shade of the house.

"I've just got to sleep a bit, miss," he said; "I didn't close my eyes last night."

Edith nodded in reply. She drew out a small table to the back porch and covered it with a white cloth. Then she brought out a pitcher of cool milk and a glass, a big plate of fresh cornbread, and some doughnuts. After these preparations were made she sat down on the step and looked anx-

iously at her visitor. She noticed that his shoes were broken and that he did not wear stockings. His thin, sallow face bore signs of recent illness, and as Edith looked at him she realized that he was young, hardly more than a boy, and her first anxious fear of him vanished. She felt sure that he was in trouble, and wondered if there was not some way in which she could help him.

The big gray horse had drunk the water and, after rolling over in the short grass, had stretched itself out as if too tired to feed. But after a little it got to its feet and began to crop the sweet clover. Just then the man also raised his head and exclaimed, "Have I slept long?"

"About half an hour," said Edith; "but I don't believe you're rested yet."

The boy's eyes had turned with a ravenous expression upon the neatly spread little table. "Is that for me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Edith. "This is Grace,"

70 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

she continued, holding up her doll; "we are keeping house."

"Are you here alone?" asked her visitor, eagerly.

Edith nodded. The young man said no more, but hurriedly finished his lunch. As he moved back from the table, he said, "I'm so tired and sick that I don't know how I can go any farther, but I must."

"Why don't you stay and rest?" asked Edith. "Your horse is tired, too."

"I'll tell you why," he replied; "because I'm a deserter from the Union army, and if I'm caught I'll be shot."

"Oh!" said Edith. "What did you desert for?"

"Because I hate war, and because I was homesick, and sick, and didn't much care what I did," said the boy, in such a forlorn voice that Edith felt more sorry for him than ever.

"Is it wicked to desert?" she asked.

"It's pretty bad," he responded dully.
"A man ought to be shot for it."

"Why don't you go back?" asked Edith.
"You stay here till you get good and rested,
and then you go right back."

"I wish I could," he said, with a little laugh; "but I guess your folks wouldn't talk that way if they were at home. They'd say that shooting was too good for me. I wish I could sleep awhile, though. I don't believe I'd mind being shot so much if I could have a good sleep."

"I'll show you a place to sleep," said Edith, "and where your horse can rest, too; and I won't tell a soul where you are till to-morrow morning, if you will promise to go right back to Captain Freeman's army."

The young man looked at her anxiously.
"Just show me the place," he said.

"Wait till I shut Tinkletoes in the shed," said Edith. "Tinkletoes is named for a good fairy who reminds people to do kind

72 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

things," she said, after the kitten was safe indoors.

"That's a good sort of a fairy, then, isn't it?" responded the boy.

"Yes, indeed!" said Edith.

CHAPTER VI

THE DESERTER

“**Y**OU’LL have to saddle the horse,” said Edith, and with some effort the young man put the saddle and bridle on the tired horse and followed the little girl.

She led him out beyond the big barn, skirted the field of wheat and pointed out a shed-like building. “There,” she said, “that is half-filled with hay, and your horse can eat all he wants, and you can sleep. I’ll go right back to the house and bring you some bread and doughnuts and milk, for you to have for your supper, and to-morrow you go right back to the army and say you are sorry.”

He looked at her and a little smile crept around his thin lips. “I believe I will,” he said.

74 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

Edith nodded approvingly. "Mrs. Freeman says to do what you ought to do comes out all right," she said, "and I guess you ought to go back. Don't you?"

"I guess I had," he said, and led his horse toward the shed.

Edith hurried toward the house and was soon back with the promised food. "I can't stay," she said, "for it's time for Mrs. Freeman to get home."

"You won't tell her about me?" pleaded the youth.

Edith shook her head. "I won't tell anybody," she promised, and hurried back to the house.

She set away the table and looked at the empty plates. "I guess Mrs. Freeman will think I was pretty hungry to-day," she said to herself, and then, taking her doll, went back to the front piazza. In a little while she could see two horses approaching at a rapid pace, and recognized one of them as Black Betty.

"I wonder if that's another deserter with her," Edith whispered to herself, as they came near and she could see that Mrs. Freeman's companion wore a blue uniform. But he was a tall, strong-looking man, far different from the sick-looking boy whom Edith had hidden in the shed.

"This is Edith Austin, Captain Marr," said Mrs. Freeman, as Edith ran down to meet them. "Captain Marr is after a deserter," she said, "so we can't ask him to stop; but we shall hope to see you in happier times, Captain."

The big man smiled.

"I'm almost hoping I won't find the lad," he said; "he was too young to be in the army, anyway."

"Every boy ought to be taught what loyalty to the flag means," said Mrs. Freeman, firmly, and as the Captain rode on she led Betty into the yard, unsaddled her, and turned her loose.

"It will be time for the 'Edith Austin

76 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

Academy' as soon as I get a bite to eat," said Mrs. Freeman, as they went indoors. "I see you have had your lunch," she continued, noticing the unwashed plates. "Well, I got my letter this time, and Captain Freeman is well, and says that he is glad I have such good company."

Edith did not make much progress with her lessons that afternoon. She was hungry, and she began to worry about her secret. Mrs. Freeman noticed the little girl's anxious expression, and when they went out to feed the chickens that night she put her arm about Edith and said, "My little girl mustn't be frightened. Captain Marr will catch the deserter; he won't trouble us."

Edith went to bed early that night, but she could not sleep. She wondered if she had done right to tell the boy where to hide, and to promise not to tell Mrs. Freeman. "But he will go back and be a good soldier," she said to herself. It was late before she went to sleep, and Mrs. Freeman did not

call her the next morning, but went out and milked the cow, turned Betty into the field, and fed the chickens. As she came out from the big barn she noticed the prints of the gray horse's shoes, and stopped to examine them. They led toward the wheat field, and Mrs. Freeman followed them until she reached the hay-shed. As she drew near the shed she could hear a low, moaning noise, and the sound of a horse eating.

Mrs. Freeman hesitated for a moment, and then pushed open the rickety door. The big gray horse poked out his nose toward her. Mrs. Freeman pushed by him toward the corner from which the moans came, and found, stretched out on the hay, the slender figure of a boy. He turned his face toward her as she approached and said: —

“Mother, I thought I should never see you again.”

“The deserter,” whispered Mrs. Freeman to herself. “How will I ever get him to the

house, poor boy," for the moaning had begun again. Mrs. Freeman looked at the big horse, and noticed the saddle. "I guess it's the only way," she said, and in a few moments the gray horse was saddled and bridled. Then she leaned over the slender figure and lifted the youth to a sitting position. "Try to stand up," she said.

The boy struggled to his feet, leaning heavily against her. "You must get into the saddle," she urged, and after several efforts he succeeded, and Mrs. Freeman started for the house, leading the big gray, who walked very slowly. When they reached the side door the young man slid down from the saddle, and Mrs. Freeman almost carried him indoors.

"He can't be more than sixteen," she thought pitifully, as she took off the worn uniform and helped him into the comfortable bed in the big room which opened from the sitting room. Then she hurried to the kitchen, and, returning with a basin of

warm water and fresh towels, bathed the tired feet and thin body.

“That hair ought to be cut,” she resolved, as she looked at the unshorn locks; and in a few minutes her sharp scissors had clipped away the unnecessary length of hair.

Arrowroot tea was soon in preparation, and then Mrs. Freeman remembered that Edith had not had her breakfast, and the sight of the gray horse gave her a new anxiety.

“My soul!” she said. “Everybody knows that we haven’t a gray horse! I must shut this one up in the stable.”

So she led the horse to the barn, hurrying back to look in upon the patient and to bathe his hot forehead with cold water. She had completely forgotten Edith, when, entering the kitchen, she found the little girl looking wonderingly at the soldier boy’s old shoes and blue clothing.

“My dear little girl,” said Mrs. Freeman, “what do you think? I have the deserter

80 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

in our parlor bedroom, and he is only a poor, sick boy."

Then Mrs. Freeman told her she had followed the marks of the horse's feet until she came to the shed, and of bringing the boy back to the house.

Edith listened anxiously.

"What I don't understand," continued Mrs. Freeman, "is how he knew about the hay-shed, and the way to get there."

Edith was just going to say, "Why, I showed him the way," and tell her good friend about the gift of food, when she remembered her promise. She had told the boy that she would not tell, and a promise was a promise. She closed her lips tightly together.

"We must do something with these blue clothes," said Mrs. Freeman. "I've a great mind to dip them into brown dye."

"He hadn't any stockings," said Edith, looking down at the worn and broken shoes.

All that day Mrs. Freeman and Edith

waited upon and cared for the sick boy. While Mrs. Freeman prepared the pot of dye and dipped the worn clothes, Edith sat in the bedroom, bathing the boy's hot head, and wondering about her promise. Not to tell Mrs. Freeman seemed underhand and unfair, and made Edith uncomfortable and not pleased with herself. But she had promised not to tell, she reminded herself, and a promise was not to be broken.

Before night came the boy's moans had ceased, and he had dropped into a restful sleep. The dye had proved its usefulness, and his uniform was now a dull brown.

"I'll press it out in the morning," said Mrs. Freeman, "and put on some other buttons, and look up some stockings and shoes for the boy."

"Will he go away to-morrow?" asked Edith, hopefully.

"No, indeed; he won't be able to sit up to-morrow. We shall have to feed him on chicken broth and everything that will

82 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

nourish him till he gets his strength. I believe the boy is half starved."

Edith sighed. She felt sure that as soon as the deserter regained consciousness he would accuse her of having broken her promise; then Mrs. Freeman would know that she had deceived her. For the first time since Edith came to the Freeman house she felt unhappy, and thought longingly of Eliza.

"Hamilton will come Monday," said Edith.

"We shall have to tell Hamilton all about it," said Mrs. Freeman, with a sigh. "Oh, dear, it's pretty hard to know what is right to do."

"Yes'm," responded Edith, with so much emphasis that Mrs. Freeman smiled.

"But I couldn't let that sick boy die in my hay-shed," she continued. "He isn't to blame for being a deserter half as much as the men are who took such a boy into the army."

Just then they heard the sound of steps on the back porch, and there came a rap at the door.

“Open the door,” said Mrs. Freeman, and Edith obeyed. As the door swung open, there stood Captain Marr.

“Oh, Captain Marr!” exclaimed Mrs. Freeman, “I am so glad you have come! That poor boy is here, in my spare bedroom.”

“I found I had gone too far,” said the Captain. “He must have been here yesterday. Funny that this little girl didn’t see him.”

“He and his horse were down in my hayshed back of the wheat field,” explained Mrs. Freeman, “and I had a dreadful time getting him up to the house. He thought I was his mother. Now, Captain Marr, that boy isn’t fit to go back to the army. What are you going to do with him?”

CHAPTER VII

NEW FRIENDS

“**I**S he sick?” inquired the big Captain.

“Come and look at him,” responded Mrs. Freeman, and she led the way toward the spare room. Captain Marr followed on tiptoe, and Edith was left alone in the kitchen, now growing dull and shadowy in the twilight. In a moment the Captain was back, his kind face anxious and worried.

“I have colored his clothes brown,” confessed Mrs. Freeman, “for I may as well tell you, Captain Marr, that I had made up my mind that the boy shouldn’t leave here until he was well.”

“Aiding and abetting a deserter!” said Captain Marr. “Why, only yesterday you

were hoping that I would capture him, and saying that boys must be taught loyalty to the flag."

"So they must," replied Mrs. Freeman, "and I want to teach it to this boy so that it will make a brave man of him; a man who will be willing to die for his flag if his country needs him, because he loves it and understands what it means. This boy doesn't know. Can't we save him for his country, Captain?"

The Captain looked at her admiringly, but he hesitated before he answered. Then he said slowly:—

"I can't decide. I wish I could; but you know it's always best to keep one's promise, and I have promised to bring this boy back to his post."

"But he is too ill," objected Mrs. Freeman.

"Yes," said the Captain, "but remember that he is under arrest, and in your custody. I shall have to hold you responsible for him

86 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

until I come for him. Are you willing to accept the responsibility?"

The Captain's voice was serious, and Mrs. Freeman nodded. "I will see that he returns to the army and reports to you, Captain," she answered.

Captain Marr could not remain for the night. Just as he was leaving he said: "Oh, this boy's name is David Goddard. His home is near Cairo."

The next day David was better. He looked at Edith as she brought him in a bowl of chicken broth, and said, "So you told."

"I didn't," she responded, with so much firmness that he did not argue, but said:—

"Well, you didn't keep your promise, so I shan't keep mine about going back to the army."

"I always keep my promises," said Edith, indignantly. "And Mrs. Freeman says that you are to eat every bit of this broth, and perhaps you can sit up in the afternoon."

David ate the broth eagerly, but as soon as it was finished he sank back on the white pillows and in a moment was fast asleep. When he awoke again it was nearly noon, and Mrs. Freeman sat by his bedside. She smiled at him and said: —

“I think this time, David, you can eat a bit of broiled chicken and a little toast. It’s all ready for you,” and she vanished into the kitchen to return with a dainty tray which she placed on a stand by the bedside, while she bolstered the boy up in a sitting position. Then she fed him the appetizing bits, talking quietly as she did so, telling him of noticing the tracks of the big horse, of following them to the hay-shed, and finding him sick and unconscious.

“You thought I was your mother,” she concluded.

Tears came into the boy’s eyes, and he looked at her appealingly.

“Then Captain Marr came after you,” she went on quietly, “and when he found

88 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

you were ill, he went away, telling me that I would be held responsible for you. And I am ready to be responsible for you, my boy," she concluded tenderly, "just as your mother would be."

"Where is the little girl?" asked David.
"Did she tell?"

"Tell what?" questioned Mrs. Freeman.

"Where I was hid?"

"Why, no!" answered Mrs. Freeman.

A little smile came over the boy's face. "She's a little brick," he said, "but I thought she told," and then he described to Mrs. Freeman how Edith had led him to the old hayshed and provided him with food. "But she didn't do it until she made me promise that I would go back to the army and be a good soldier," he concluded.

This made Mrs. Freeman smile. She remembered Edith's unusual quiet, and said, "Well, Edith always keeps her promise, you see."

"I'll try and keep mine," said David.

Just then Edith appeared at the door of the room, and Mrs. Freeman told her to come in, and she came slowly forward. Mrs. Freeman put her arm about the little girl and drew her toward the bed.

"David," she said, "this is my dear little girl, Edith Austin, who kept her promise to you, although she was very unhappy because she could not tell me all about it. But she felt that she could not break her word."

Edith's eyes looked lovingly up to her friend's face. "Oh," she said happily, "you always understand!"

"Yes, indeed!" said Mrs. Freeman, with a little laugh, "and David understands."

The slow tears gathered in the boy's eyes. "I guess you are thinking I have broken a promise in running away from the army," he said, "but I didn't think about that side. I'll go back."

"Of course you will, my dear boy," said Mrs. Freeman, "but not until I say so. Not

90 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

until your mother has made you a visit here, and not until you are well and strong and happy." And leaving Edith to keep him company, Mrs. Freeman went out to attend to the many duties that awaited her.

Edith had already begun to knit the white stockings, so she got her knitting, and her fingers were busy as she sat in the quiet room.

"Are you knitting stockings?" asked David, turning his head to watch her.

"Yes," said Edith, "white openwork stockings. You can't see the pattern yet, but when I have knit a little more it will look just like fern leaves. Mrs. Freeman has found some nice soft brown stockings for you; and she has dyed your clothes a lovely brown and is going to press them all nice for you," and Edith smiled at him encouragingly; but as he made no response, she continued, "Don't you want to know why she dyed your clothes?"

The boy nodded. "Well, I guess she

dyed them so as to remind you that you wasn't a soldier any more."

David lifted up his head. "But I am going back," he said.

"Yes," said Edith, "but you are not a soldier now."

"Why ain't I?" questioned the boy, as if offended.

"Oh, because," said Edith, "real soldiers don't run away. But perhaps you will be a real soldier sometime."

"I suppose you think it's fun being a soldier," said the boy, "tramping all day in the mud and sleeping in it, and never having any clean clothes, and every time there's a skirmish seeing the best men you know killed," and the boy drew a shuddering breath. "You don't know what it is," he concluded.

"But Mrs. Freeman says that men have to defend the flag; and she says our flag means everything, that it means safe homes, and happiness, and every good thing there

92 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

is," and Edith forgot to knit and looked at David eagerly. "Didn't you know what it meant?" she asked.

"Going to war isn't any fun," responded the boy. "I didn't know it meant that I had to go so far from home that I couldn't get any word to my folks; and when I found the regiment was going to Georgia, I just couldn't stand it. What makes Mrs. Freeman so good to me? Why didn't she let Captain Marr take me back?"

Edith looked thoughtful for a moment before she answered, then she said: "Well, I heard her tell Captain Marr that she wanted to save you for your country. And I guess she will say little prayers for you, just the same as she does for Captain Freeman."

David made no response. He turned his face away and lay very quiet, and Edith went on with her knitting. Only two days more, she thought, and Hamilton Worthley would come to harvest the grain. She wondered what he would say to this new boy,

not much older than himself, "and he's not half so brave as Hamilton," thought Edith.

By Monday morning David was well enough to be dressed, and was out on the side porch when Hamilton drove into the yard. Hamilton looked wonderingly at the big gray horse which was feeding in the field near Black Betty.

"This is David Goddard, Hamilton," said Mrs. Freeman, introducing the two boys. "Hamilton Worthley has come to help us harvest."

Hamilton looked at David as if wondering who he was, and Mrs. Freeman soon found a chance to tell him that David was a sick soldier boy who was to stay with them until he was well.

That very afternoon Mrs. Jones drove over from The Corners, bringing her little girls with her. The little girls looked exactly alike. Their eyes were black, and their black hair hung in smooth curls that

94 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

came just to the pretty little embroidered collars around the necks of their pink-sprigged muslin dresses.

Edith looked at them admiringly as they came up the porch steps.

"I have brought the twins over to see your little girl," said Mrs. Jones to Mrs. Freeman, and the little girls looked at Edith and smiled. One was called "Kitty," and the other, "Puss."

"This is Kitty," said Mrs. Jones, and one of them came forward and put her hand in Edith's. Edith felt quite grown up, for she was a year older than the twins and much taller. They went up to her attic playhouse and soon became very good friends. Edith discovered that Puss spoke with a little lisp.

"I am so glad you lisp, Puss," said Edith, "because now I can tell you really *are* Puss."

"Oh, yeth," replied Puss, "everybody thezth that."

CHAPTER VIII

A FOX AND A FAIRY

THE morning after the visit of Kitty and Puss, Edith was sitting on the back porch, playing with Tinkletoes.

“You must be a very good kitten,” she said, as she tried to teach him to jump over her hands when she clasped them in front of him, “because you are named for a fairy prince!”

As this information did not seem greatly to impress the maltese kitten, Edith looked at him anxiously for a moment and then said: “I don’t half believe in fairies anyway. I guess Mrs. Freeman meant that good fairies are just another name for good thoughts. But I’m not sure. Of course there may be fairies.”

The kitten jumped out of Edith’s lap

and scampered across the yard, and away went Edith after him. Down into the field he ran, and when Edith again captured him she found that they were well on the way to the walnut grove.

“I know what we will do, Tinkletoes,” she exclaimed. “We will go to the grove and see if we can’t find out if Prince Tinkletoes lives there. He is so small that he can ride about on a butterfly, so perhaps I wouldn’t see him; but you are so little you might run right across him perching on a tall blade of grass.”

The kitten, held close in the little girl’s arms, made a desperate effort to escape so that he could begin the search at once, but Edith did not let him go.

“Wait till we get to the grove,” she said, “and then you can run all you want to.”

As soon as they reached the shade of the walnut trees Edith put the kitten down and away he scampered, his white feet showing like silver as he ran here and there.



"OH! YOU HANDSOME FOX!" — *Page 97.*

"I think Tinkletoes is a lovely name for him," thought Edith, as she watched him admiringly, "for even if he hasn't tiny little silver bells on his feet, his feet are just silvery white, so it is almost the same."

Edith ran about among the trees watching Tinkletoes closely. Finally he scampered up to her as if afraid, and Edith picked him up. Just back of a low-growing shrub she could see a gleam of reddish yellow, and in a moment a pointed nose poked out from the shelter, and then Edith could see two sharp dancing eyes, and then a fox came cautiously out and, with its head turned toward Edith, looked as if to see what the little girl was going to do next.

"Oh!" said Edith, admiringly. "You handsome fox!" For she had seen foxes ever since she was a tiny girl and well knew their appetite for chicken. "I know all about you," she said, nodding her head at him. "You are sly reynard, that's what you

98 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

are.” The fox seemed surprised at this unfriendly remark, and retreated behind the bush and disappeared.

“You didn’t find a fairy that time, did you, Tinkletoes?” said Edith, holding the kitten closely. “We’ll go down the slope a little way and see what else lives in this grove besides fairies and foxes.”

Edith wandered down the slope and finally decided that she was tired and would rest, and sat down where she could lean comfortably against a big tree. Tinkletoes ran up its trunk, to the evident alarm of a smart chipmunk, who went chattering away to another tree.

Edith put her head against the tree and in just a moment the most remarkable thing happened!

She heard a little silvery tinkle and a big yellow and white butterfly drifted down right into her lap, and from its back there stepped off a tiny figure that looked as if it were made of bits of silver tissue. On its

head was a tiny cap like a violet blossom, and its eyes shone like the smallest of stars. It perched on her hand, and as Edith looked at him he bowed very low.

"Is it Prince Tinkletoes?" whispered Edith, and the little figure bowed again, and vanished. But Edith felt something very close to her ear, and then she heard this thread of a voice say, "You must always be a very brave girl, and you must do all you can to help Mrs. Freeman."

"Yes, indeed," said Edith, and then her head nodded violently, and she woke up. "Dear me!" she said, "if I didn't go to sleep. I almost believe that is all there is to fairies anyway," and she jumped up quickly, picked up the kitten, and ran down the slope.

"I guess I must go home," she decided; "Mrs. Freeman will think that I am lost." She started back through the wood, but she was a little dazed from her nap and hardly knew what direction to take. She wandered

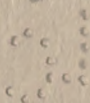


about for some time, but could not find her way out.

“Oh, Tinkletoes!” she said. “Do you suppose we are lost?” And Tinkletoes gave a faint little mew, as if to say that he really believed they were.

Edith was a sensible little girl, and she had always lived with people who knew the out-of-door world and had heard many stories of adventure. She remembered now of hearing her brother-in-law tell of once being lost in the woods and of climbing the highest tree near him, and being able from that height to see where he was, and to know in what direction to go. But this did not seem to be of much use to Edith. The tree-trunks were so round and smooth that she could not possibly climb even one of the smaller trees.

“You could, Tinkletoes,” she said, looking at the kitten almost reproachfully. And then she remembered that cats could always find their way home, and with a gay little laugh



she put Tinkletoes down. "Now go straight home!" she commanded. And away scampered the kitten, with the little girl close behind him, and in a very little while they stood on the edge of the field and Edith could see the path that led toward home.

"I guess good fairies whisper to kittens sometimes as well as to people," she said as she hurried across the field.

Dinner was all ready when Edith came in. "I've been lost," she exclaimed, in answer to Mrs. Freeman's anxious questions, "and I've seen a fox and a fairy," and she told of her morning's adventures, greatly to the amusement of David and Hamilton.

"Are you too tired to help make a load of hay this afternoon?" asked Hamilton.

"No, indeed," said Edith, who thought the ride in the big hay cart, and the treading down the fragrant hay as the boys pitched it into the rack, was the greatest frolic possible.

"I will help you," said Mrs. Freeman,

“for I want to get the hay in as soon as possible so that Hamilton can have a spare day for a picnic.”

The boys looked much pleased at this piece of news and hurried away to get the hay rack ready, while Edith and Mrs. Freeman washed the dishes. Tinkletoes had curled himself up in a sunny window and evidently was satisfied to rest quietly for the remainder of the day.

“I wonder if the fox Edith saw is the one that has been carrying off my chickens,” said Mrs. Freeman, as they joined the boys on the way to the hayfield.

“I’ll bet there’s a whole family of them in those woods,” said Hamilton. “Probably the one Edith saw was the mother fox out looking for a young bird or two to take home to her family. How many chickens have you lost, Mrs. Freeman?”

“I have only missed two,” said Mrs. Freeman; “but last summer I lost seven in two nights.”

"I tell you what, David," said Hamilton, "after we get this load in, let's go over to the grove and try to get a shot at Mrs. Fox or one of the cubs."

"All right," agreed David.

Edith was very quiet all the afternoon. She kept thinking how pretty the fox was as it stood looking at her with its sharp, bright eyes, and she wondered about the little foxes. It seemed to her that she could not bear to have Hamilton or David kill the reddish yellow fox-mother which had not been afraid to come from behind the bush and look at her. She told Mrs. Freeman this as they rode home on the big load of hay.

"But what about my pretty white chicks?" asked Mrs. Freeman. "Do you want them killed? If we do not frighten Madame Fox and her family away, we shan't have a chicken left, and we might lose even Robin Goodfellow."

"I didn't think about the chickens," said Edith.

“Madame Fox and her family live by killing young birds, as well as chickens,” said Mrs. Freeman. “She is not a very desirable neighbor, and it will be a good plan to frighten her away.” But before the boys were ready to start for the grove a heavy shower came up, and the fox-hunt was postponed.

“I hope Mrs. Fox and her family will go a long way off before to-morrow,” thought Edith.

That evening David marked out a checker-board on a smooth piece of wood, and cut out some little squares for checkers. “I’ll teach you how to play checkers,” as the little girl watched his busy fingers, “and we will call the game ‘War’; and one side can be the Confederate army and the other side the Union.”

Mrs. Freeman was busy with her sewing and everything was very quiet, when suddenly there came a loud squawking from the chicken-yard. Mrs. Freeman dropped

her work, and David sprang toward the door exclaiming, "The fox!" Edith followed and in a moment all three were running toward the chicken-yard.

Sure enough, sly reynard had paid them a visit and had captured another plump chicken.

"I'll bet I can get him this time," said David; "probably he'll make right for the walnut grove. I can take the rifle, can't I, Mrs. Freeman?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered; and in a few minutes David was running across the field toward the grove, and Mrs. Freeman and Edith returned to the house to wait for him.

"It was a reddish yellow fox," said Edith, thoughtfully, "and its eyes were so bright. It was a pretty fox, Mrs. Freeman;" and the little girl's voice was so mournful that Mrs. Freeman put her arm about Edith and drew her close to her side.

"You don't want the fox killed, do you,

dear?" she said, and Edith shook her head vigorously.

"I guess the fox don't know it's wrong to take chickens," said the little girl. "The little foxes get hungry and they like chicken, so the mother and father fox go and catch a chicken for them. We eat chickens," she concluded.

"So we do," said Mrs. Freeman, "and I believe that I shall be sorry, too, if David kills the pretty fox, although I hate to lose my plump chickens."

It was not long before David returned. "I couldn't get a trace of reynard," he said; "it was so dark that he had a good chance to slink away. I'll try for him to-morrow."

But Mrs. Freeman had a plan for the next day which made David forget the fox, and so reynard went unpunished.

CHAPTER IX

BRUIN'S VISIT

IT was very early the next morning when David heard a tap at his door, and Mrs. Freeman called his name. "David," she said, "I want you to dress as quietly as possible, so that Edith will not be awakened; breakfast is all ready."

"What time is it?" David responded sleepily.

"It is half-past four," was the answer.

"Perhaps she has seen the fox," thought David, as he sprang up and hurried downstairs. "Have you seen the fox?" he asked as he entered the kitchen.

Mrs. Freeman shook her head smilingly. "No!" she answered; "but I have a plan for Hamilton's pleasure to-day, and I want you to help me. Hamilton has had to work so hard all summer and has so much respon-

sibility that I think a day off will do him good, so this morning, as soon as we finish breakfast, I want you to ride and meet him. He starts from home about five, and you will meet him before he gets here, and tell him that I want you boys to go to Bream Pond and catch me a mess of pickerel. You can take Captain Freeman's rods and lines along with you."

"That will be great!" said David, enthusiastically. "But I wish you and Edith were coming, too."

"Well," said Mrs. Freeman, "I think about noon that you boys will be a little hungry, and about that time you can expect to see Edith and me appear with a well-filled basket."

David's thin face was bright and smiling, and he looked at Mrs. Freeman gratefully. "You are so good to me," he said in a low voice, and added, "A month ago I thought I never should have a chance to be happy again."

Mrs. Freeman patted the boy's shoulder affectionately. "You are going to be happy," she said, "and you and Hamilton must have a real good time to-day. Tell him to be on the outlook for us about noon. Now eat your breakfast."

In a short time David was riding swiftly down the road, carrying the fishing rods, and eagerly anticipating a day's sport. He had not gone over a mile before he saw Hamilton approaching, and in a few moments had told him the plans for the day.

"I wish we had a rifle along," said Hamilton; "we might get a shot at a coyote or jack rabbit. But it will be fine to be at the pond to-day instead of working in the hayfield."

The way to the pond led over a road but little travelled and nearly overgrown with grass. "There used to be a sort of a dug-out kept on this side of the pond," said Hamilton, as they came in sight of a small sheet of water. "I hope it's there now."

They unsaddled their horses and tied them under a wide-branched tree, and then made their way to the shore. The dug-out was there, but nearly under water.

"There isn't much interest in fishing since the War began," said Hamilton, regretfully, as they took off their boots and waded into the pond. After a good deal of pushing and lifting the rough boat was turned bottom up on the shore, and the boys looked around for a couple of good stout poles to use to push the craft to the upper end of the pond, where, among the shallows and the tall water grasses, pickerel were known to lurk.

"If that dug-out could lie in the sun to-day, it would be all the better for it," said Hamilton, as they made preparations to launch once more their rude craft. The boat settled into the water more deeply than met their approval, but the boys decided it would be all right; and with a can of angle-worms for bait and their rods and lines in readiness, they pushed out from shore.

A little breeze ruffled the water, and the boys smiled at each other as they made their slow progress toward the fishing ground.

"This is great!" said David, enthusiastically.

"You just wait until we begin to pull in the fish," responded Hamilton.

"It seems to me this boat keeps settling," he said a moment later; "let's push nearer the shore so if she goes under we can save Captain Freeman's rods."

David laughed as he put his pole into the water.

"What about saving ourselves?" he asked.

"We could do that, I guess," responded Hamilton; "but the rods might slip away from us."

"I hope the old thing will stay afloat until we get a chance at the fish," said David.

They kept well inshore until Hamilton said, "We can push up among those reeds now. You get your lines ready, and I'll keep the boat steady."

"All right," said David. "As soon as I pull in a three-pounder, I'll give you a chance," and with a skilful throw he sent his line over a tall bunch of grass and waited.

But it was a short wait, for in less than a moment he was playing a fine pickerel and soon landed it in the bottom of the boat. Twice more did his line fly skilfully into the lurking place of the unwary fish, and bring them floundering and resisting to the side of the dug-out. Then Hamilton began to get uneasy.

"I believe we could both fish," he said.

"Of course we could," responded David, heartily, who did not wish to shut his companion off from such good sport or to give up his own.

Hamilton's first throw brought in the largest pickerel yet captured, and the boy gave a little jump of delight at the size of the fish.

"Look out there!" called David, but it was too late. The ticklish craft had toppled

over, and the boys were floundering in the shallow, muddy water.

Hamilton was the first to get a footing, and, looking about, saw that David was evidently trying to right the boat.

"I've got my rod all right," called Hamilton.

"So have I," answered David; "but the bait is gone and so are those big fish. Can you wade over here? I guess the old thing will stay up."

"It's all my fault," said Hamilton, as with great care the two boys again established themselves in the boat. "I don't know how I came to make that foolish jump. What had we better do?"

"We might get ashore and dig some more worms," suggested David, "and get some of this mud off. Won't we be a sight when Mrs. Freeman comes? But I do want to get some pickerel for her."

They made their way to the shore, laughing at their adventures and at each other's

absurd appearance, but resolved not to be cheated out of their fish. With the help of a forked stick they secured more bait, wiped the mud from their trousers with the grass, and again embarked, this time with great care.

“How shall we know when it is noon?” asked David, when they were again in the pickerel’s haunts and Hamilton was throwing his line, so far without success.

Hamilton was facing toward the shore, and his attention was attracted by the movement of the tall grasses.

“Look, David!” he responded in a low voice. “Just below where we went ashore; what is it?”

David’s eyes fixed themselves on the spot indicated. A big brown figure was making its slow way down to the water.

“It’s a bear!” he answered.

The big creature waded out into the shallows and drank, then lifted its head and looked questioningly toward the dug-out.

"Do you suppose he will wade out here?" asked David. Hamilton made no answer; a sharp pull on his line made him forget the bear for a moment.

"I've got a bite!" he exclaimed, and pulled in a big pickerel. "I'll bet that old bear would like that," he said, waving his rod toward the shore.

"What will we do?" said David. "It must be nearly time for Mrs. Freeman and Edith, and our horses are not half a mile down the shore. The bear may make a lot of trouble for us."

"I guess not," said Hamilton. "He's had his dinner and come down for a drink, and probably feels pretty well satisfied with life and will go up there in the sun and sleep an hour or two." As he spoke, however, Hamilton was reeling up his line. "We had better keep quiet a few minutes and see what Mr. Bear's plans are," he said.

"I hope this old craft won't sink about this time," whispered David.

Hamilton's conclusions about the bear were apparently correct, for, after another look toward the boat, it turned and made its slow way up the bank and disappeared in the tall grass.

"We'll get back to the horses now," said Hamilton, "for if Mrs. Freeman and Edith get to the landing before we do, they may come up along the shore, and I guess it's just as well for them not to."

"I should say it was," responded David, and as rapidly as possible the two boys poled the rickety craft down the pond, keeping well out from the shore.

"Will Mrs. Freeman be frightened when we tell her about the bear?" questioned David.

"Let's not tell her," responded Hamilton. "If we do, we will have to start for home right off, and she and Edith won't have any good time at all. The bear won't be apt to come down this way; he may plan to go pickerel fishing himself a little later, and we

might as well build a fire and cook this one fish and forget about the bear."

"We will keep a sharp lookout," answered David, a little doubtfully.

When they came in sight of the landing, the boys could see Mrs. Freeman and Edith on the shore, waving to them. As soon as they brought the dug-out near enough to spring on shore, Edith called out:—

"Oh, see! They are both soaking wet!"

"We are pretty dry now," replied Hamilton, laughing, "but we did get tipped out of this craft and had to walk ashore. And we lost four fine pickerel by the upset."

"Yes, we have had all sorts of adventures!" said David, but Hamilton gave him a warning glance.

"What other adventures did you have?" asked Edith, eagerly.

"What would you say if I told you that we saw a Great Big *Bear*?" said Hamilton, in a deep voice.

Edith laughed. "I should say you were trying to frighten me," she said.

"There is a bag of oats in the buggy," said Mrs. Freeman. "I think the horses will be quite ready for their dinner."

"I will make a fire, David, if you will look after the horses," suggested Hamilton, and David hurried away.

When he had looked after the horses, he walked up the shore of the lake a short distance and looked about and listened carefully, but he saw or heard nothing to alarm him and returned to his friends, feeling that perhaps Hamilton was right after all, and that it was better not to spoil Mrs. Freeman's day by telling her of the possibility of danger.

Mrs. Freeman had brought a tin coffee-pot, and when David got back to the shore the fire was blazing noisily, the coffee-pot was steaming with fragrance, and Hamilton had dressed the pickerel and was broiling it on a hot, flat rock which rested on a bed of red-hot coals. "There will be a taste of

fish for us, anyway," said Hamilton, "but just think of those big fellows we lost."

"These things smell almost too good," said David, sniffing at the broiling fish.

"Do they?" asked Hamilton, anxiously, "I didn't think about that. You don't suppose —," and he stopped suddenly.

"Suppose what?" asked Mrs. Freeman.

"Why, that the Great Big Bear I was telling Edith about will smell our dinner and come racing down here after it," he answered.

"If there was a bear near here, he would probably do just that very thing," said Mrs. Freeman.

Hamilton jumped up from his seat near the fire so suddenly that he nearly upset the coffee-pot.

"What would we do if a Great Big Bear came right down here?" asked Edith.

"Run," said Mrs. Freeman, laughingly, "and let him eat the hot fish and coffee instead of us."

David and Hamilton were so quiet that Mrs. Freeman began to fear that they had taken cold. They both said that they had all the fishing they wanted; and when after lunch Mrs. Freeman proposed a walk toward the head of the pond, the boys both declared that it was much prettier in the other direction; and David went valiantly ahead, while Hamilton followed the little party.

David said that the dug-out was not safe to go in far from shore, so Mrs. Freeman and Edith had to give up their plan for a little trip across the pond.

"We had better make an early start for home, hadn't we?" suggested Hamilton.

"Oh, yes!" eagerly seconded David, so that Mrs. Freeman began to observe the boys more closely. She could see that both of them jumped at any cracking of the underbrush, and that they went to see that the horses were all right and were gone an unusual length of time, coming back to the

shore flushed and hurried as if from running, and she began to wonder if it was possible that the boys had really seen a bear.

About three in the afternoon Black Betty was harnessed into the buggy, the boys carefully extinguished every trace of the fire and saddled their horses, and they were ready to start.

"I'll go ahead," volunteered Hamilton; "you follow me, Mrs. Freeman, and David will bring up the rear."

"Why, that sounds quite like a military excursion," said Mrs. Freeman.

"Yes," answered David, "Hamilton and I want to keep a lookout for the enemy."

"Are Hamilton and David playing a game?" asked Edith, as they drove along.

"Perhaps they are," replied Mrs. Freeman.

"Then I think that they might tell us so that we could play too," said Edith.

"Perhaps it is part of the game for us not to know," said Mrs. Freeman.

Edith was looking eagerly from side to side.

"I guess I saw something you boys didn't see," she said, when they came to the main road, where Hamilton was to leave them. "Back there a little way I saw a big brown dog lying down in the grass."

"What?" exclaimed both the boys so loudly that Edith laughed.

"Yes, I did," she repeated. "But I don't believe you could find him now, for it was as much as a mile back, just after we left the pond."

"It was a bear!" said David, and then the boys told Mrs. Freeman of seeing bruin near the head of the lake and of not wishing to frighten her and Edith.

"We kept a close lookout," said Hamilton, "and the bear was so fat that I felt sure he didn't feel hungry enough to do much harm. I guess David and I could have frightened him away."

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said Edith, "I know you could."

But Mrs. Freeman did not feel nearly as

sure, although she said, "Both of you were very brave and thoughtful, but I am thankful enough that we are safely on our way home."

"But it was such a fat bear, Mrs. Freeman," said Hamilton. "I couldn't really be afraid of anything as fat as that bear."

After bidding Hamilton good-by David sent his big horse along at a good pace, followed closely by Black Betty, and home was soon reached.

Hamilton arrived in good season the next morning, and he and David discussed the pickerel fishing and the bear.

"This is a great country for game," declared Hamilton. "But you wait until the War is over and Captain Freeman and my father get home, and you won't hear of a bear in this neighborhood. You'll be well enough to go back to your regiment pretty soon, won't you, David?"

"I hope so," replied the deserter, with a little sigh.

CHAPTER X

A VISIT TO BRIDGE ROCK

AS David grew stronger, Mrs. Freeman thought of many plans to entertain and amuse him; and a week after the trip to the pond she decided to give Hamilton another holiday, and to drive with Edith and the boys to The Corners, get Kitty and Puss, and then go on to a place known as Bridge Rock, where a bridge of rock, wide enough to walk over, bridged a wide brook.

The weather proved favorable on the day decided upon, the Jones twins were delighted to go on a picnic, and Black Betty and the big gray went together very nicely. Hamilton and David had put a pole on the carryall. Mrs. Freeman, David, and Puss sat on the front seat, and Edith, Kitty, and Hamilton were on the rear seat.

A pleasant cross-country drive of about six miles brought them into a more hilly region, and now and then the road led through a stretch of woodland.

"I never knew there were such pretty places in the world," said Edith.

"Wait till you see Bridge Rock," said Hamilton. "It is as much as thirty feet above the stream. Once some boys I knew tried to climb up the cliff, but they had to give it up."

"Why did they have to give it up?" questioned Edith.

"You will see why when we get there," answered Hamilton. "For a few feet the sides of the cliff are rough, and little shrubs grow here and there; but before you are half-way up the stones get smooth so there isn't anything to get hold of."

They had made an early start and before noon had turned from the main road into a rough cart-track which led to Bridge Rock. They drove into a little clearing near the

stream and the boys looked after the horses, while Mrs. Freeman and the little girls followed a woodland path leading up a slope to where the bridge crossed the stream.

“How wide is it?” questioned Edith.

“I think it is about five feet in width and about ten feet long,” replied Mrs. Freeman. Grass grew along its edges and here and there a slender little bush clung to the rock.

“Can we go across it?” asked Kitty. Mrs. Freeman hesitated a moment and then, with a little laugh, said: “Why, of course you may. Edith may go first and come back, and then Puss can go, and then Kitty, and I will go last of all.”

“Can’t Puss and I go together?” asked Kitty. But Mrs. Freeman shook her head. “No, each one must go alone,” she said; “it is hardly wide enough for two little people to walk across together.”

Edith made the trip, and stopped in the centre to look down at the boys in the clearing below.

"I gueth I don't want to go acroth," said Puss.

"Oh, yes, you do," urged Kitty. "You will be sorry, when father asks you about it, to say that you were afraid."

"I'm not afraid," objected Puss, "I jutht don't want to." But a few persuasions from Kitty and Edith apparently overcame her fears, and Puss started out boldly. She had reached the middle of the bridge when a shrill cry startled the others.

"Oh —!" wailed Puss, coming to a full stop. "I'm thcared! I'll fall into the brook — oh — oh!"

"Go right on, Puss," said Mrs. Freeman. "Walk straight ahead, it's only a few steps more."

"I can't! I can't!" sobbed the child, crouching down. "I dathent!"

"Puss," said Mrs. Freeman, "get up and go straight across this minute."

Puss knew from the tone that obedience was expected, but to rise to her feet and

deliberately walk on was beyond her courage; so, sinking to her hands and knees, she crept slowly over the bridge to the other side, and then turned toward her friends. They were all laughing now; the moment of fear had passed at the sight of Puss's sturdy little figure going over the bridge bear-fashion.

"Now are you going to walk back, or creep back?" asked Mrs. Freeman.

"I gueth I'll walk," said Puss, smilingly, and the smile lasted until she was safely back beside her sister.

The boys had started a fire near the edge of the stream and were roasting potatoes.

"They taste fine to eat them out of their jackets like this," said Hamilton, cutting off the crispy end of a potato and putting a pinch of salt into the mealy centre.

After lunch the boys went in search of berries, and Mrs. Freeman said she believed that she would take a little nap, and Edith

suggested that the twins should go with her for a little walk up the stream under the bridge.

"Do you s'pose anybody could climb up there?" Kitty asked wonderingly, as the little girls stopped under the bridge and looked up.

"I guess I could," said Edith. "I don't see why those boys Hamilton told about could not go 'way up. Why, there are lots of little humps on those smooth-looking stones that they could climb up by."

"I than't climb up there!" said Puss, fearfully.

"Of course you won't," said Kitty, reassuringly. "Nobody could climb up there."

Edith's eyes were still gazing longingly up the rough sides of the cliff.

"I suppose it would spoil my shoes to climb up there," she said thoughtfully.

"You could take off your shoes," suggested Kitty. "Boys are 'most always barefooted, and I guess you could keep hold better in

some places with your toes than if you had on shoes."

"Why, of course I could, Kitty," said Edith, immediately sitting down on a flat rock and beginning to unlace her shoes. "And you and Puss just take my shoes and stockings and go up the path to the top and wait for me."

Kitty looked at her admiringly. "I guess Hamilton will be surprised when he hears that you climbed right up where boys couldn't," she said.

"I shouldn't think they were very smart boys, then," said Edith.

Puss viewed these proceedings with a doubtful eye, and was very near to tears when led away by her bolder sister, carrying Edith's shoes and stockings.

The first of the climb was comparatively easy; and though a sharp stone or rough root hurt Edith's feet occasionally, she did not mind it, for her heart was filled with a determination to surprise Hamilton and David.

“I guess Mrs. Freeman will be proud if I can do things that boys can’t do,” thought Edith as she toiled valiantly upward. A stout little shrub here and there gave her assistance, but as she got higher up the shrubs were smaller, and stretches of comparatively smooth surface were before her. She could not see Puss and Kitty now, but she knew they must be at the top waiting for her. She dared not look behind her for fear she should lose her hold. Her feet began to ache from frequent bruises and contact with the rough rock, and her hands were scratched. She had torn her pretty gingham dress in several places, and by the time she was half-way up she heartily wished that she had not made the attempt. She began to wonder how the boys had got down after getting half-way up, for she felt very sure that it was safer and easier to go ahead than to turn back. There were rough places on the rock surface that afforded her a doubtful foothold, and her

hands clung desperately to every possible crevice or projection as she crawled upwards.

She had accomplished about two-thirds of the ascent when David and Hamilton came under the bridge and looked up. Hamilton was the first to see her, and with a gesture he called David's attention to the little figure working its dangerous way up the face of the rock.

"Don't say a word," whispered Hamilton. "We've got to help her as quickly as we can; come on," and the boys made their way toward the wagon. They took the stout leather reins and ran rapidly toward the bridge. There was not time to awaken Mrs. Freeman and tell her of Edith's desperate venture. Both David and Hamilton realized that there was not a moment to lose.

Reaching the top of the bridge, Hamilton lay down on his face and looked over. Edith had advanced but a few inches since he saw her. Her eyes, looking up, met his.



BOTH DAVID AND HAMILTON REALIZED THAT THERE WAS NOT
A MOMENT TO LOSE. — *Page 132.*

"Edith," he said slowly, "here's something to help you. Take a good grip on this strap that I'm letting down, and hold on tight and we'll pull you up."

"But I can't," she called back. "If I let go of this little rock I'll fall."

"All right," responded Hamilton. "Just hang on where you are and I'll slip a noose over your head. Manage to get your arms over it."

It was a desperate remedy, but it proved successful. The leather noose dropped around the girl's shoulders, one arm shot up through it and grasped the strap, the noose tightened, there came a steady, upward pull, and in a few minutes the boys had drawn the little figure safely to the top. They lifted her into safety, loosened the noose, and then looked at her questioningly.

"Didn't you know better than to try to do that?" said Hamilton. "I told you that some boys tried one time to climb up and couldn't."

"You didn't tell me that any girls ever tried and couldn't," answered Edith.

"See her poor feet," said David, taking his handkerchief out ready to bandage a poor bruised toe. Just then Kitty and Puss appeared.

"I gueth we got loht," said Puss; "we've jutht got up here."

The twins looked at Edith in surprise. Her bruised hands and feet, her torn dress, and a scratch on her face made her rather a tragic figure.

"I wonder what Mrs. Freeman will say to this!" said Hamilton, soberly.

At this Edith began to cry. "O dear," she sobbed. "I thought that she would be so proud to have me climb up where boys couldn't; and now I've torn my dress and got all scratched up and perhaps she will be sorry that she ever had me come to live with her. O dear!"

David sat down by the forlorn little figure and put his arm about her. "Mrs.

Freeman will understand," he said. "You just put on your stockings and shoes and wipe your eyes, and Kitty will help you pin up your dress, and we will go down and tell her all about it. I know just what she will say," and he smiled down at Edith's anxious face.

"What will she say?" questioned Edith.

"She will say, 'Well, wasn't it lucky that Hamilton saw you just when he did,' and then she will say, 'I'm glad enough to have my little red-headed girl safe and sound.'"

Edith smiled at this, and after Hamilton and Kitty had laced up her shoes they all went slowly down the hill.

Mrs. Freeman was picking up the shawls and looked up at the little procession with a smiling welcome. Before she could speak David had told the story of the adventure and of Hamilton's presence of mind; and when he finished Edith felt Mrs. Freeman's arms about her and heard her say: "Well, I am glad enough to have my little girl safe

and sound. She mustn't try to be braver than other people; I like her just as she is."

On the way home Mrs. Freeman sat on the back seat with Edith and Puss, and Edith leaned her head against her good friend and went fast asleep and did not waken until they stopped at The Corners.

CHAPTER XI

DAVID DISAPPEARS

AFTER the picnic Mrs. Freeman and Edith were so busy that the "Academy" held very irregular sessions. David Goddard proved a good assistant in mathematics, and Edith became expert in fractions, which David taught by slicing a potato into sections, explaining what one-sixteenth really was.

It had been decided that David's mother was not to visit him. As he grew stronger he realized how unhappy his mother would be to know of his desertion from the army, and Mrs. Freeman agreed with him that it was better she should not know at present. Letters had been sent to Captain Marr and to Captain Freeman, and to Washington, and Mrs. Freeman was full of confidence

that David would be allowed to return to his regiment. He was now anxious to go, and letters were expected to tell him what his fate would be. Hamilton believed that David was on a furlough, and seized every chance to ask him about his army experiences, listening admiringly to all that David said. His admiration for the army, and for David as one of its soldiers, was so evident that, almost unconsciously, David began to pride himself upon being a soldier. Then, too, he could see how hard Mrs. Freeman worked to keep her home in comfort because of her husband being in the army, and of the pride with which she spoke of his service for his country. He heard of the flag which was always kept flying at The Corners, and gradually the real spirit of loyalty and patriotism awoke in the boy's heart; and he longed for the very hardships from which he had fled, if by bearing them he might do even a little toward establishing the honor and strength of his country.

When Hamilton and Mrs. Freeman had finished their day's work, they would all sit together on the front porch for a "rest hour," as Mrs. Freeman said, before Hamilton started for home. Then she would tell the boys stories of the world's great heroes: of Cromwell's undying courage, of Wellington, the "Iron Duke," and of our own Washington; of the hardships and sufferings which they had endured for the cause of right. The boys were stimulated to new ideals of valor and courage, while Edith listened eagerly, thinking to herself that some day she would do some brave act, not for her country, perhaps, but for Mrs. Freeman.

In a short time the grain and hay were all under cover, and Hamilton no longer rode over every morning and home at night. David was now able to be of great assistance. He cared for Black Betty and the big gray horse, looked after the cow, and was beginning to dig the potatoes. Every day he

grew in strength, and his gentleness had already won Mrs. Freeman's affections.

"I think we ought to knit woollen stockings for the soldiers," said Edith one day, as she "toed off" her own white stockings.

"Why, what a wise little girl!" said Mrs. Freeman. "That is just what we ought to do, and we'll begin with our own soldiers, Captain Freeman and David. But we can't begin until we get some woollen yarn. You see we haven't a sheep to our name; and not having sheep, why, there were no white fleecy rolls to be made into yarn."

"Can't we get some?" asked Edith, eagerly.

"Well," said Mrs. Freeman, "I believe I'll ask David to saddle up this very afternoon and go to The Corners and see what Mr. Jones has."

David agreed cheerfully and started off with a note for Mr. Jones.

As he rode away, looking so straight and well, Mrs. Freeman said to herself, "I'm



THEN SHE WOULD TELL THE BOYS STORIES OF THE WORLD'S
GREAT HEROES. — *Page 139.*

sure I have done right. He will make a good soldier."

That afternoon Edith began the letter to her sister Eliza. She told her of how much she was learning; of the new white open-worked stockings, and of how happy she was, and finished the letter by saying that perhaps she would come and visit Eliza some time in October. Mrs. Freeman had suggested the visit, as she wished Eliza to feel that her little sister was not forgetting her.

After the letter was finished, Edith and Mrs. Freeman gathered the sage and spread it to dry on papers in the long, low attic, already fragrant with other herbs.

This attic was very low, a grown person could hardly stand upright in it, but Edith thought it was a beautiful place. There were long, narrow windows in each end. The western window opened right toward, and over, a big russet apple tree. Near this window was a small black leather trunk

with rows of brass-headed tacks around the top.

"That would be a lovely place to keep Grace's clothes in, wouldn't it?" suggested Edith.

"Of course it would," agreed Mrs. Freeman. "And don't you think that this corner right by the window would be a fine place for Grace to live? You can call it Grace's house, and keep her and all her belongings up here; then when it is stormy or cold, or when you want to be alone with Grace, you can run up and visit her, and other times you can keep her downstairs."

"Oh," exclaimed Edith, "I didn't write Eliza a word about Grace!"

"Never mind, you will have that to tell her when you go on your visit," replied Mrs. Freeman.

The afternoon passed very quickly, and when the early dusk came, they began to watch for David's return. Mrs. Freeman had started a little fire in the open Franklin

stove in the sitting room, and the reflection of the blaze on the window-glass made a pleasant light through the room. In the kitchen there was an appetizing odor of broiled ham, and a dish of freshly baked apples had just been taken from the oven.

“David couldn’t get lost, could he?” questioned Edith, as the clock struck seven and there was yet no sign of him.

“I don’t think he could,” replied Mrs. Freeman. “You know he went to The Corners with me last week, and had such a nice talk with Mr. Jones. I suppose he has lingered longer than he realized. But it will do him good to listen to Mr. Jones. There is no more loyal man in the State.”

But as the evening passed and David did not come, Mrs. Freeman grew very anxious. Edith went to bed early without a doubt that David must be on his way home. Mrs. Freeman sat in the fire-lit room and waited. She could not bear to doubt David’s honesty; but he was strong, mounted on a good horse,

with a dollar or two of money, given him to purchase the yarn, in his pocket. If he wanted to run away, he would never have a better chance; and yet she was somehow sure of the boy's honesty. Until midnight she waited for him, and then, with an anxious heart, she went to her room and tried to sleep. Her slumbers were restless, and before daylight she was up and out on the piazza, looking down the road toward The Corners and hoping for a sight of David.

Edith came down to breakfast at the usual hour and ran out on the piazza. "Can I pick up potatoes this morning?" she asked, as she skipped up and down the piazza. "And did David get the yarn?"

"David has not come yet," answered Mrs. Freeman. "I sat up for him until nearly midnight."

"Then something has happened to him," said Edith.

Mrs. Freeman's face seemed to brighten at this. "Why, I haven't thought of any

accident," she said, smiling down at Edith as if the little girl had brought her good news.

"You don't want anything to happen to David, do you?" asked Edith, wonderingly.

"You dear child, of course I don't. But I have had very unhappy thoughts about him. I have been thinking that perhaps David was a coward after all, and that now that he is well and strong he has taken the first chance to run away again. So you see that I would much rather think that some accident has detained him."

"Would you rather he had broken his leg?" asked Edith.

"Why, yes," answered Mrs. Freeman. "His leg would soon mend itself; but if he has been false again to his promises, his whole life will be injured beyond mending."

But David's leg was not broken, nor had any accident befallen him. All night long he had pushed the big gray to its utmost speed. For David was carrying a message for Mr. Jones, and upon the speed of the

horse and the honesty of the deserter hung the fate of an Illinois regiment.

When David arrived at the store, Mr. Jones greeted him eagerly. "Young man," he said, "I am going to give you a chance to make yourself famous and to save a regiment. You will have to ride two hundred miles to do it. You will have to go hungry, like enough, and you'll be shot if your business is discovered, but you must do it."

"I'll do it if it can be done," answered David; "but I guess I ought to tell you something, sir, before you trust me. I'm a deserter. I hid in Mrs. Freeman's hay-shed and she found me. But I didn't know what I was doing when I ran away," continued the boy. "I'm going back even if I go back to be shot."

Mr. Jones put his arm on the boy's shoulder and looked into his face. "You are just the one I'd choose if I had my pick of a dozen," he said. "If you carry this through in safety, you will win back your right to be

a soldier. If you fail, you will have failed in trying to help your country. I have discovered a dastardly scheme," he continued. "An Illinois regiment has planned to go over bodily to the Confederacy. They have their arms and ammunition. Their plan is to surrender to an attack of a small body of Confederate soldiers. Now I have written this all out, the plan of the whole thing, and how I discovered it. You must carry this paper to General McClelland's headquarters and deliver it into his hands as soon as possible, so that these traitors can be blocked. You must start at once. If you live, I shall know it. If you die, you die for your country, a brave soldier."

David concealed the paper carefully inside of his soft flannel shirt, and a few minutes later the long strides of the gray horse were carrying him swiftly toward the boundary line of the State.

CHAPTER XII

THE MAKING OF A HERO

AFTER David was well on his way, he remembered the errand on which Mrs. Freeman had sent him, and which he had entirely forgotten. The note to Mr. Jones and the money for the yarn were in his pocket. Almost unconsciously he brought the big gray horse to a stop. What would Mrs. Freeman think? That he had kept the money for himself? Then he smiled at the thought, remembering Mrs. Freeman's confidence in his honesty. "She'll understand that I didn't think of it," thought the boy. "Mr. Jones will tell her how he hurried me off, and she'll understand." So he urged the gray horse on.

It was well past midnight when he made his first stop. Mr. Jones had given him a

package of food, and David made a sparing lunch, knowing that the chances were that he would not be able to secure food on the next day's journey. He hoped to reach his destination in another twenty-four hours, and he realized that his horse must have rest.

When he turned in from the road he found shelter behind a thick-growing mass of wild sumac, and here he took off the gray's saddle and turned him loose, knowing the horse would come at his call. A clear little stream flowed near by, and both horse and rider drank eagerly. David planned to rest only two hours and then push on, but he was soon asleep and did not awake until the gray light of morning. His horse stood close beside him.

He had just picked up the saddle when he heard the sound of hoofs on the soft road. In a moment he could distinguish voices. It was apparently a large body of mounted men going in the opposite direction

from which David was bound. He was glad he had not started in time to encounter them. Had he known who the travellers were, he would have realized his escape from a very real danger. They were members of the disloyal regiment, even now on their way to an established rendezvous.

It was noon before Mrs. Freeman and Edith made up their minds that David was really not coming, and that they must go in search of him. Black Betty was harnessed, and they started toward The Corners, driving slowly, and constantly on the lookout for some sign of the big horse or its rider.

"Have you seen David?" Mrs. Freeman called out before they had reached the store.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Jones. "He stopped here yesterday a few minutes."

"Did he get any yarn?" asked Edith, eagerly.

"No," answered Mr. Jones, slowly. "I don't recall that he mentioned yarn."

This seemed to confirm Mrs. Freeman's worst fears, and for a moment she was silent.

"You don't need to worry about him," said Mr. Jones, but he did not explain the reason of David's disappearance. Those were troublous times, and his secret was of such importance that the loyal man had resolved not to mention it until he was assured of David's safety.

"But we expected him home," continued Mrs. Freeman.

"Did you? Well, now, ma'am, if you ask me, I'd be willing to say that I shouldn't be surprised a bit if that boy had started out to join the army, and being in a hurry forgot to mention about the yarn. What kind of yarn was you wanting, ma'am?" and Mr. Jones turned to go into the store, and Mrs. Freeman and Edith slowly followed him.

Edith found a chance to whisper, "He hasn't run away, I know he hasn't," behind Mr. Jones's back.

Mrs. Freeman did not answer. She had sheltered and interceded for a deserter, she thought, and made herself responsible for him because he was so young and ill; and this was the result: at the first opportunity he had run away again rather than face the results of his desertion.

"We won't need to buy yarn to knit David stockings," she said.

"Oh, can't I knit some for him?" pleaded Edith. "Mr. Jones says he's almost sure David has gone back to the army, and he will need stockings anyway."

Mr. Jones nodded approvingly. "Don't you cherish any doubts about that boy, ma'am," he said. "I guess I'd better tell you right now that he has gone back to the army."

"I presume he would say so," said Mrs. Freeman, a little bitterly, and selected her yarn without any further reference to David.

Mr. Jones saw them start for home and looked after them mournfully. "Seems kind

of unfair to the boy not to tell Mrs. Freeman about what he's set out to do," he reflected, "but she will have to wait for the good news. He'll be a hero the next time she hears about him. Hope the little girl will begin the stockings for him."

They were very silent on the way home. Mrs. Freeman's thoughts were not happy ones, for David seemed very near to her. Edith was wondering if she could not knit David the stockings after all. The little girl did not doubt David's honesty; she thought perhaps he would be at home when they got there.

David knew his course well, and often left the main road to ride across a strip of grass-land or to skirt some narrow stretch of woodland, thinking that if by any chance he should be followed this would mislead his pursuers. At noon he rode the big gray in among a thick-growing cluster of young oaks and dismounted. He did not unsaddle this

time, and there was no water near, and both horse and rider were very thirsty. David knew that before dusk he must cross the Mississippi River. He knew that a ferryman could be summoned by blowing a horn, kept in a small box on a post on David's side of the river; but David did not feel disposed to trust the ferryman, who might be an ally of the disloyal regiment.

The boy had resolved on a bolder course. He would endeavor to ford the river. He had confidence that the big gray would carry him safely over. After the brief rest at noon, David rode more slowly. Once or twice he let his horse rest in the shade of some big tree, wishing to reserve his strength as much as possible for the ordeal before him.

It was early dusk when he rode down to the river's edge. The water looked dark and uncertain, and the boy wondered how deep it would prove. The river was not wide at that point, and here and there were bars of sand showing above the water, so

that David had reason to think it shallow enough for him to make the passage easily.

The big gray ventured in cautiously, but after a little he gained confidence and went forward more rapidly. They had reached the middle of the river and David's anxiety had vanished, when his horse suddenly plunged forward and the boy was thrown over his head into the river. The current was strong, and as soon as David realized what had happened to him he also knew that he was being carried swiftly downstream.

His first thought was that he must not be carried down-stream. He must not drown, he thought wildly, until that message was delivered, until he had redeemed himself. He could not swim, but the current swept him near a sand bar and he managed to gain footing upon it.

As he looked back, he could see the gray horse swimming toward the shore. Then a new fear seized the boy. How could he

ever reach the shore without his horse? He could not swim, and there was no other way possible unless the big gray would answer to his call and come back to him. David knew that every moment was precious. He gave the long whistle to which the horse had been taught to respond. The horse recognized his master's call and turned downstream. In a few moments he stood beside David on the sand bar. He was evidently very tired, and the boy gave him a chance to rest for a few moments before he mounted. This time the gray did not stumble, but reached shore and bravely made his way up the bank.

It was now dim and shadowy with the coming night. A cold wind blew off the river, and David shivered in his wet, clinging clothes. The big horse breathed heavily. Except the grass he had cropped during their brief rest, he had had nothing to eat for two days, and David knew that he must in some way give him a good feed and rest,

or he could never hold out for the journey. But he dreaded the questions that might be asked should he stop at any house on the road.

The horse walked slowly on, his head hanging, his breath coming heavily. As David looked anxiously ahead, he could see the long, dark outlines of a building near the road, and as he came nearer he saw that it was a rough shack and outbuildings, such as were built by the early settlers of the West. There was no sign of occupancy. The place was evidently deserted. David rode up toward the back of the house and dismounted. He soon satisfied himself that no one was there. He pushed open the door to the low barn and peered in. Through the shadows he could see that the loft was filled with hay, and he hesitated no longer, but led the big gray in.

As he looked about he noticed a large wooden box, and lifted the lid. It was nearly full of oats. This was unexpected

good fortune, and the tired horse was soon munching happily while David rubbed him down and groomed him as best he could with wisps of dry hay, for David realized that it was more important that his horse should be in good condition than that he should rest himself.

After he had finished this duty, he went to the barn door and looked out. He wondered if there was not a fireplace in the ill-built little house, and wished that he dared go in, build a fire, and dry his wet clothes. But he did not make the venture. His package of food was all gone and he was hungry; but there was no way in which he could get food. As he leaned against the door he heard a whir in the haymow and looked up. A hen was peering at him over the edge of the lower fall of hay. Her anxious head cocked on one side as if to inquire what he did there.

"Eggs," thought David, happily, and clambered into the loft, while the anxious

Biddy went fluttering about as if trying to frighten him away. He soon found a nest, and as there were only three eggs in it, he was sure that they were reasonably fresh, and lost no time in eating them. Then he went down and pushed the shaky door to and crept back to the haymow for a rest. He knew that it must be only for a little while, only long enough for his horse to feed and rest.

He did not go to sleep, but snuggled down in the warm hay, thinking about Mrs. Freeman and Edith, and wondering what Mr. Jones had told them about his disappearance, and what they would say when they knew of his adventurous ride. The big gray champed steadily on, the brown hen had accepted the intruders and settled down for the night, and a peaceful quiet rested over the place, when David was suddenly startled by the sound of a number of horses pounding steadily along the road that led toward the river. He slipped down to the barn

floor and pulled the door open a crack and looked out.

A party of a dozen or more horsemen were coming briskly forward, and as they reached the buildings the foremost drew rein and called out: "This is Carter's shack. There are plenty of oats and hay in the barn, and a chance for a fire in the house. We'll camp here for the night."

David's legs trembled and his breath came quickly, but it was not a moment to hesitate. Before the party had all dismounted he had saddled the big horse; and just as several of the men approached the barn door they started back in amazement to see it pushed suddenly back; and, a second later, to see the gray horse spring out and speed away down the turnpike with a boy, half in the saddle, clinging to its neck.

"A deserter, I'll bet," said one of the men.

"We haven't time to find out," responded another. "We haven't any use for him,

whatever he is. We must get a night's rest before we are captured by the Confederates."

The other men laughed at this, for they were part of the disloyal regiment, whose plot against their country was to be frustrated by the boy riding rapidly toward the Union camp.

All night long the horse went steadily on, stopping now and then for a breathing spell, when David's tired eyes would almost shut with sleep. It was growing light over the low range of hills toward the Alto Pass when David came in sight of a group of tents and saw a blue-coated sentry watching him intently.

The big gray came to a full stop as the sentry approached. David told his message briefly, and in a few moments, with a soldier on each side of him, he was being led toward the camp of the commanding officer.

"Give my horse a good feed and take care of him, will you?" he called back to the man who had taken charge of the gray.

“Sure!” nodded the soldier, with a little smile at the boy’s earnestness. “We don’t catch a good horse like this every day,” an answer that made David uneasy even in his gladness at having reached the Union camp in safety.

CHAPTER XIII

NEWS FROM DAVID

IT was the fourth day after David's departure when Mrs. Freeman and Edith were startled by the sound of voices on the back porch. Two men, apparently, were engaged in a serious discussion as to which should enter first.

"What is it?" exclaimed Edith.

"Hush," said Mrs. Freeman. "I will look out of the side window and see who it is before I go to the door." She peered out of the window, and then turned back to Edith with a laugh. "It is Hamilton Worthley making believe that he is two Indians," she said, and called out "Come right in, Hamilton."

"I guess I can't fool you much, can I?" said the boy, as he came into the room;

“but I fooled a whole bunch of soldiers last night and sent them about their business. They were a queer kind of soldiers, too,” he added.

“Not Confederates?” asked Mrs. Freeman, anxiously.

“No,” answered Hamilton, slowly. “I guess they were Union men, for they wore blue clothes, but they were not the kind of Union men that Illinois sends to the War. They got to our house near morning, and we heard them say that our barns would make a first-class bonfire after they’d fed their horses and had breakfast, so I just braced up and did what I could. I opened our front door wide and called out, ‘What regiment is this?’ just as loud as I could, and before they could answer I called in another voice: ‘Ready with your muskets, men, to defend the house and property of a Union soldier.’ Well, by that time mother had got my rifle and opened the back door and fired two shots into the air. I called

out again, 'What regiment is this?' but the men did not stop to answer; they galloped off as fast as they could go."

"If they really were Union soldiers, they would have answered," said Mrs. Freeman. "You showed a great deal of courage, Hamilton. Your mother must be proud of you."

The boy's face crimsoned at her praise. "Where's David?" he asked.

"David has gone to join the army," said Mrs. Freeman, who had resolved not to speak of her suspicions. "We are hoping soon to have news of him."

"I am knitting stockings for him," said Edith, eagerly, holding up the half-finished leg of a blue yarn stocking.

While they were talking there came a vigorous rap at the front door, and Mrs. Freeman went to answer the summons. In a few moments she returned, followed by Mr. Jones from The Corners. Mrs. Freeman's face was sunny with smiles, and Mr. Jones

came into the room as if he were ready to dance with joy.

“Mr. Jones has brought great news,” she said. “Our David has proved himself a hero.”

“And best of all,” said Mr. Jones, “the regiment is saved. Their officers have lost their shoulder-straps, and will probably be saved from court-martial by going into the ranks; and the members of the regiment are to be scattered into other companies.”

“What had David to do with it?” inquired Hamilton.

Then Mr. Jones told the story of starting David on his long ride with the message that revealed the plot. David had written Mrs. Freeman of his reception at the Union camp, and of the praise given him by the general in command. He had gallantly wiped out his fault, and, while it could not be forgotten, he was forgiven. He was to join his own regiment immediately, and his letter was just such a letter as Mrs. Free-

man had hoped sometime to receive from him. He ended with the request that she would send him the little Testament which she had given him.

Mrs. Freeman did not read the letter aloud, but told them that David would not return at present. Then Edith told Mr. Jones of Hamilton's adventure of the night before.

"Well, well," exclaimed the storekeeper. "You are a hero as well as David, my boy. Your place is surely at home when you can do such good work as that."

Edith listened to him and thought to herself that boys had all the chances. She would like to do as brave things as David and Hamilton had done, but girls could only knit stockings, and she regarded the blue yarn leg with disapproval.

"We must start a box for David as soon as possible," said Mrs. Freeman, after her visitors had gone. "I am glad you have made such a good start on his stockings.

I will take up another pair for him, and we will manage to make him a nice blue woollen shirt."

"It must be fine to do things like David does," said Edith.

"It is fine that he has proved himself worthy of his country," responded Mrs. Freeman. "He asked me to send him the little Testament," she added.

"He used to read in it every day," said Edith. "He said he had never had a Bible before. Perhaps if he had had a Bible, he would not have run away," and the little girl looked up questioningly in her friend's face.

"I don't believe he would, my dear," responded Mrs. Freeman, "for the Bible teaches the finest kind of loyalty; and that was a lesson that David was ready to learn."

As soon as the stockings and shirt were finished, a box was started for David, and after that the "Edith Austin Academy" began work in good earnest.

“Did you have any little girls to play with when you were about as big as I am?” Edith asked one day, as she and Mrs. Freeman sat by the western window, busy with a large map and a list of important seaports.

“I guess I did,” said Mrs. Freeman. “Why, in our village there were ten girls just about my age; and we went to school together, and had picnics in summer, and went coasting and skating in winter.”

“You must have had lovely times,” said Edith. “I don’t know any little girls except Puss and Kitty.”

“We must ask Puss and Kitty and their mother over to spend the day very soon, and we will ask Hamilton and his mother; it will be a real party, and we must have it before you go,” said Mrs. Freeman, “so you can tell Eliza about it.”

“What is a party?” asked Edith.

“A party is a real good time,” answered Mrs. Freeman, “where little girls bring their dolls, and play games, and have a very

nice tea with preserves and frosted cake and hot biscuit and honey."

Edith could hardly sit quiet in her chair as she listened to all the good things that made up a party.

The very next day Hamilton rode into the yard on his way to The Corners, and Mrs. Freeman sent an invitation for Mrs. Jones and the two little girls to come over the next day and spend the night. Hamilton was sure that his mother and himself could come to dinner and stay until late in the afternoon, so Mrs. Freeman and Edith began to get ready for their guests.

"We will have the games in the afternoon so Hamilton and his mother can play," said Mrs. Freeman.

"Do grown people play games?" asked Edith.

"Just wait and see!" replied Mrs. Freeman.

Mrs. Worthley and Hamilton were the first to arrive, and soon after Mrs. Jones

drove into the yard. Puss and Kitty waved their hands to Edith as she came running out to meet them.

After the early dinner was cleared away, Mrs. Freeman called the children into the big sitting room.

“Now this is a really, truly party,” she said, “and so we must all play games. And as I am the youngest person here, except Mrs. Worthley and Mrs. Jones, why I suppose I must tell you what games to play.”

“Can’t we play some game that you used to play when you were a little girl?” asked Edith.

“Indeed we can,” said Mrs. Freeman. “Now let’s all stand up and join hands and make a circle. And now we must all dance round,” and Mrs. Freeman began singing:—

“Here we go round the gooseberry bush,
The gooseberry bush, the gooseberry bush,
Here we go round the gooseberry bush,
So early in the morning.”

172 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

When they came to a full stop, all were laughing heartily.

“Now you must sing with me and do just as I do,” said Mrs. Freeman, and she began to sing again, this time rubbing her face with her hands.

“This is the way I wash my face,
I wash my face, I wash my face,
This is the way I wash my face,
So early in the morning.”

Then they all joined hands again as before, singing: —

“Here we go round the gooseberry bush.”

At the next stop Mrs. Freeman sang:—

“This is the way I wash my clothes,”

illustrating the song by rubbing imaginary clothes.

“I declare,” panted Mrs. Jones, as she sank into her chair, “I never expected to play that game again.”

“Let’s play ‘Oats, Peas, Beans, and Bar-

ley grow,'” said Mrs. Jones; and as Edith looked up at the bright-eyed little woman, she thought that the twins would look exactly like their mother when they grew up.

“Oh, yeth!” exclaimed Puss, eagerly. “We play that, don’t we, Kitty?”

“Then you and Kitty start it,” suggested Mrs. Freeman.

The two little girls stepped out in the centre of the room, joined hands, and began dancing around and around, singing:—

“You, nor I, nor nobody knows
How oats, peas, beans, and barley grow.”

Then, imitating with the right hand the motion of sowing seed, they sang, standing at ease:—

“Thus the farmer sows his seeds,
And then he stands and takes his ease;
Stamps his foot and claps his hand,”

and they suited the action to the word,

“And round he goes to view his land,”

and the little girls twirled round so rapidly that the smooth black curls seemed to dance in the air.

“Waiting for a partner, waiting for a partner,
Choose the one that you love best,
And then you’ll surely suit the rest,”

and Kitty ran toward her mother, while Puss took Edith by the hand, and the game went on until all the little company were going “round to view their land.”

Hamilton said he wished that they could play “Hunt the Squirrel,” but it was decided that the room was not large enough; so Hamilton talked “like an Indian,” to the great wonder of the Jones twins.

After they had rested from the games, Mrs. Freeman said that when she was a little girl and went to parties they almost always made molasses candy; and if the “party” would please step into the kitchen, she would see if she had forgotten how it was made.

When they reached the kitchen, Mrs.

Freeman gave each of the little girls a gingham tier, which covered them from neck to heels. She tied a big apron around Hamilton's neck, and Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Worthley also put on aprons. Then a porcelain-lined kettle about a third full of molasses was set on the kitchen stove. Mrs. Freeman brought out a bread board and a pan of flour and two white platters.

"Do you sprinkle in a little soda?" asked Mrs. Jones, peering into the kettle, where the molasses had already begun to bubble and steam.

"Yes," said Mrs. Freeman; "it always pulls so much better."

Edith was sure that nothing had ever smelled so good as that bubbling kettle of molasses, and as she looked at Puss and Kitty and realized that she was really having a party, she gave a little skip of pure happiness; and Puss and Kitty smiled at her and skipped too, for they knew that it was going to be great fun to pull the candy.

The kettle was set on the back porch to cool a little, and then the fragrant brown mass was dipped out, still warm, in big spoonfuls on the bread board, where Mrs. Freeman cut it in thick strips, sprinkled it with flour, and handed it to the others to pull.

Mrs. Jones proved the most skilful. She made beautiful braids of candy. It did not seem to stick to her hands as it did to Hamilton's and Edith's; but the big platters were soon covered with yellow strips and braids and queer-looking shapes, and the candy pull was over.

Mrs. Jones and the twins were to stay all night, but Mrs. Worthley and Hamilton had to hurry away before dark.

"I've had a fine time," said Hamilton. "I wish David had been here."

"Oh, so do I," said Edith. "But I suppose a hero like David wouldn't care about a party."

"I'll bet he would," said Hamilton.

It was early in the evening when Puss and

Kitty began to grow sleepy, and Edith went upstairs with them to help them get ready for bed. She was not at all sleepy herself. After her little visitors were sound asleep and she was almost ready for bed, she was too happy to sleep. She thought how many lovely things had happened. First of all, the good news about David. Then to know two little girls and to have a party and play games and make candy. "And it's all because Mrs. Freeman is so good," the little girl thought, as she snuggled down in bed. "Oh, I wish, I wish I could do some brave thing so Mrs. Freeman would know how much I love her!"

CHAPTER XIV

EDITH LEARNS TO RIDE BLACK BETTY

WHEN Mrs. Jones and the twins started for home the next morning, Edith rode a little way down the road with them, and promised that after her visit to her sister she would come and see them.

“We will have a party, too,” Mrs. Jones said, as Edith got down from the carriage and bade them all good-by. When she got back to the house, she could not find Mrs. Freeman, so she went across the yard to the stable. Mrs. Freeman was putting her saddle on Black Betty.

“I am going to have you learn to ride Betty,” Mrs. Freeman said, as the little girl came in the stable door. “If you could ride Betty, I could send you on errands to The Corners, and I think the exercise will be good for you.”

“Oh, goody!” said Edith; “and if Confederates come, I could ride after Hamilton.”

Mrs. Freeman laughed. “I guess you will be more apt to ride after a package of pepper,” she said. “I am going to have you sit 'cross saddle; it is the only safe way to ride. Just step up on that box, Edith, and sit in the saddle just as Hamilton does. Now hold your reins this way, and remember if you hit your heels against Betty, she will think that you want her to go fast, and off she will start at her best speed. I will lead her out of the stable and around the yard.”

Edith was not at all afraid and was delighted to learn to ride. After leading Betty around the yard once, Mrs. Freeman said, “Now ride round by yourself;” and Betty marched slowly around, with Edith holding the reins carefully and smiling with happiness.

“I guess Hamilton will be s'prised when he sees that I can ride horseback,” she said, when Mrs. Freeman lifted her down.

The next morning Edith was ready for a second lesson, and this time she ventured to touch her heels lightly against Betty's shining sides. The big horse responded instantly, and Edith was carried swiftly around the yard. This morning she rode down the road a little way, turned Betty, and came back quite like an experienced horsewoman, and much to the satisfaction of Mrs. Freeman.

"I want to teach you to do all the things that you ought to do, and that you will enjoy doing," she said to Edith. "If you live with me until you are a woman, you will be healthy, fearless, and wise, if I can help make you so."

Edith did not make any response for a moment, then she said thoughtfully, "I guess there isn't anything to be afraid of, if you only think right, is there?"

Mrs. Freeman answered quietly, "That's the very heart of courage, my dear. Always be ready to do the right thing, as

it seems right to you, and fear will not show its head."

"Confederates must be scared all the time," said the little girl, as they walked toward the house.

Mrs. Freeman laughed. "No, indeed, for the worst part of the War is that many of the Confederates are sure they are right!"

"O dear!" said Edith. "It's dreadful hard to be sure about what is right."

"Well, this morning it is right for us to bring in the pumpkins and squash," said Mrs. Freeman, "and after that I guess we'll have to shell beans for an hour or two; and then the 'Edith Austin Academy' gives a course in grammar, and then—" but the sober look had vanished from Edith's face, and she skipped along by Mrs. Freeman's side.

"And I guess dinner comes in there somewhere," she said.

"O dear!" said Mrs. Freeman, "and a boiled dinner at that, with pumpkin pie!"

That evening, just before Edith went upstairs, Mrs. Freeman said, "I suppose, my dear child, that we must make our plans for you to visit your sister very soon, before the cold weather comes on; but it makes me lonesome to think of it."

"Don't you want me to go?" asked Edith.

"I shall miss you dreadfully," said Mrs. Freeman.

"Oh, that's lovely!" said Edith; "I guess nobody ever missed me. You see Eliza couldn't really afford to have me; she used to say so. If you will be lonesome, I won't go."

"Yes," said Mrs. Freeman, "I know it will make Eliza happy to have a visit from you, so I want you to go. But only for two weeks; then you will be home by Hallowe'en."

Edith looked up questioningly, for "Hallowe'en" was a new word to her.

"Why, I believe you do not know about Hallowe'en!" said Mrs. Freeman. "Come

right over here and sit in my lap while I tell you about it, and about what I used to do on Hallowe'en nights."

Edith was soon comfortably established, with Mrs. Freeman's arm about her. The fire burned brightly, and a warm sense of love and happiness seemed to come into Edith's lonely heart.

"Hallowe'en is the very last night of October," began Mrs. Freeman, "and if you ever have a Hallowe'en party, as I used to have, you must be sure to ask the fairies to come. Just before Hallowe'en the fairies are always on the lookout for invitations. The best way to invite them is to braid three rings of sweet grass and hang them on the outside of a window. You must hang the rings out at least two days before Hallowe'en, and you must put a wish inside of each ring, and be very careful not to look at the rings until the day after Hallowe'en."

"And then what do you find?" asked Edith, eagerly.

“Oh, you find the rings all safe, and before the year, people say who know all about fairy rings, your wishes will come true. Then there was a game we used to play with a string. Each one of us would take a long piece of twine, and we would all sit about the room in a circle. Then, at a signal from one of the party, we would each one begin to tie knots in our piece of twine, each of us repeating this verse aloud: —

“ This knot I knit,
This knot I spin,
To safely keep
My wish within.
This knot I knot
That you may see,
I knit not yet
My wish to me,

and you must not stop tying the string while you repeat the verse. Then you must tie the string to your bedpost, and whatever you dream will come to pass.”

Edith gave a doubtful little giggle as she

snuggled her head against Mrs. Freeman's shoulder.

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Freeman, as if surprised. "Don't you believe in Hallowe'en wishes coming true? Well, there are Hallowe'en cakes that I know are true, big, beautiful, round cakes. And in a truly Hallowe'en cake there is a gold ring, a button, and a thimble!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Edith.

"Yes, indeedy! And when the cake is cut in slices, the girl or boy who gets the slice with the gold ring in it is sure to grow up wise and good, and marry his own true love. And the girl who gets the slice with the button in it will be a thrifty and happy old maid; and the boy who gets the thimble will be a poor, unfortunate old bachelor."

"Then I had better go and see Eliza and come home before Hallowe'en?" asked Edith.

"I really think that is what we must make up our minds to," said Mrs. Freeman, "and

we will plan to have a Hallowe'en cake when you get home. But there shan't be a button or a thimble in it, only a beautiful gold ring."

"And that slice shall be for you," said Edith.

"Now I have a beautiful plan," said Mrs. Freeman. "I am going to let you ride Black Betty to your sister's. I cannot leave home to go with you, but I am going to ask Hamilton Worthley to go with you. It is not a long ride, and Hamilton can bring Betty home, as I could not do without her. Then when the day comes for you to come home Hamilton will come after you."

"You think of lovely things," said Edith, putting her arms around Mrs. Freeman's neck. "I guess the fairies will be sure to answer your wishes."

The fire had begun to smoulder and die down, so Mrs. Freeman and Edith said good night. Edith was wondering what Eliza would say when she came riding up on big

Black Betty. She felt a little eager now for the time of her visit to arrive. "I wish I could take you, Tinkletoes," she said, as she carried the kitten upstairs to its usual resting place at the foot of her bed. "I know Eliza would like to see you." Tinkletoes purred vigorously as if to say that he was quite sure of it. "But Mrs. Freeman will want you to stay at home with her for company," concluded the little girl, as she put the kitten carefully down on the cushion at the foot of her bed.

When Edith came downstairs the next morning, Hamilton was in the kitchen talking to Mrs. Freeman.

"Do you remember that nice brown dog you saw, coming home from the pond?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," answered Edith. "Have you seen him again?"

"No," replied Hamilton; "but the family who live beyond us have missed two nice fat pigs within the last month, and they sus-

pected there was a bear around and set a trap for him; and yesterday Mr. Bruin walked right into it, and now that family is eating bear steak."

"Then they got their two fat pigs back, didn't they?" said Edith, at which Mrs. Freeman and Hamilton both laughed.

"Hamilton has brought us a very nice invitation," said Mrs. Freeman. "His mother wants us to come to her house on Tuesday to dinner, and Hamilton is going over to The Corners to ask Mrs. Jones and Puss and Kitty."

"I wish David was here to go, too," said Edith.

"We will plan something nice for David when he does come," said Mrs. Freeman. Promising Hamilton that they would start for his house in good season on Tuesday morning, they bade him good-by and watched him ride off towards The Corners.

"Do you suppose Puss could be cured of lisping?" Edith asked.

Mrs. Freeman laughed. "Why, what made you think of that just now?" she responded.

"Well, you were telling us about the man who lived so long ago, who cured himself of stuttering," said Edith, "and I thought perhaps Puss could."

"Perhaps she could," replied Mrs. Freeman.

Edith smiled happily. "I guess I'd better tell her about that man who cured himself," she said.

"I am glad enough to hear that that bear is disposed of," said Mrs. Freeman. "I felt anxious ever since we were at the pond, but now we can come and go in safety."

On Tuesday morning Mrs. Jones and the twins drove into the yard. Mrs. Freeman and Edith were to ride with them.

"We seem to have parties and picnics all the time," said Mrs. Jones, as Edith climbed into the back seat of the carryall beside the twins. "I only wish all our sol-

dier boys were safe at home to enjoy them with us."

"It won't be very long, I hope," replied Mrs. Freeman.

"Do you thuppothe we will play gameth?" asked Puss.

"I know we will," said Kitty, "for once before we went to Mrs. Worthley's, and we played blindman's-buff, in the big room where the loom is."

"Goody!" said Puss.

"Something happened at our house last night," said Kitty.

"What?" asked Edith.

"Well," said Kitty, settling herself more comfortably and leaning back, "what do you think! My father shot a fox!"

"Oh!" said Edith.

"It wath a bad fox," said Puss reassuringly, for Edith's tone had been almost accusing.

"Yes, indeed!" said Kitty. "It had carried off our nice little chickens."

“Was it a reddish-yellow fox with bright eyes?” asked Edith.

The twins both nodded cheerfully. “Yeth, it wath,” said Puss.

“O dear!” said Edith, “that fox didn’t know that it was wrong to kill people’s chickens.”

“Its skin will make a lovely rug,” said Kitty, looking at Edith with surprise.

“You children can go right in the shed-room and play,” said Mrs. Worthley, when they had taken off their hats. “Hamilton has some new games to show you.”

The little girls went out into the big, pleasant room. The maltese cat got out of her basket and looked at them wonderingly, and Tinkletoes’ brother came jumping toward them.

“I guess they want to hear about Tinkletoes,” said Edith, so she lifted up the kitten and said: “Your little brother is real well. He is shut up in the shed to-day, but he has two big saucers of milk and one of water,

and if he had known where we were coming, he would have sent his love."

This made the twins laugh. "Cats don't know what you say," said Kitty.

"Tinkletoes does," said Edith. In a few minutes Hamilton came out.

"Do you want to see me play circus?" he asked.

"You don't know how," said Kitty, who wondered to herself what kind of a game "circus" was.

"Yes, I do," replied Hamilton. "Look up there," and he pointed toward the ceiling, where suspended from the stout beams was a sort of trapeze, two ropes of equal length united by a horizontal bar.

"Ith that a thircuth?" asked Puss.

"It's a part of a circus. I can do tricks on that bar," said Hamilton, "you just watch me;" and walking slowly to the further end of the room, he removed his jacket, rubbed his hands vigorously together, and then made a running leap

toward the bar, which he caught hold of with both hands.

The little girls drew close up to the wall, the cat and the kitten scuttled under the old loom, and Hamilton began to play circus. He swung from the bar by one hand, then he drew himself up and sat on the bar, swinging rapidly back and forth; and then, wonder of wonders, he carefully lowered himself and actually hung suspended by his feet!

The little girls watched him in admiring suspense, and when he swung himself lightly to the floor and said, "There! that is playing circus!" none of them had a word to say. It seemed to Edith that Hamilton was the most remarkable boy that ever was. "That's most as queer as being a ven-triloquist," she thought. The cat and kitten came out from under the loom, and just then Mrs. Worthley called them to dinner.

CHAPTER XV

A CHARADE PARTY

IT was the week after Mrs. Worthley's party, and Kitty and Puss were playing in the attic when Puss said: —

“Why don't we have a party?”

“Because,” answered Kitty slowly, “we haven't anything new to do at a party. We played all the games at Mrs. Freeman's, and we made molasses candy, and at Hamilton's house we watched him do circus tricks.”

“O dear!” sighed Puss. “I wish we could have a party. Don't you think mother knowth thomething we could play at a party?”

“Perhaps she does,” answered Kitty hopefully, and the two scampered downstairs in search of their mother.

“We want to have a party,” said Kitty,

eagerly. "It's our turn now, mother, and we do want to have something different from Edith's or Hamilton's."

"Well," replied Mrs. Jones, "you just run over to the store and ask your father about it. I wouldn't wonder a bit if he knew some lovely games that you never heard of before."

So Kitty and Puss ran across the street and found their father standing in the store door.

"Oh, father!" said Puss. "We want to have a party."

"Yes," said Kitty, "and mother said perhaps you could tell us some lovely new games to play!"

Mr. Jones smiled at their eagerness, and then looked very serious indeed.

"There isn't any such thing as new games," he said. "When I was a little boy my grandmother taught me the games she played when she was a little girl, and her grandmother taught her those very same games."

"O dear," said Puss, feeling sure that she could not have a party. But Kitty was more hopeful.

"What were some of the old games?" she asked.

Mr. Jones rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Let me see," he said. "When I was about your age I used to play Charades."

"Why!" exclaimed Puss, "thath a new game. What ith it?"

"Well," said her father, "I suppose it's a sort of riddle. Take a word or a name, and do not tell what it is, but try to make a picture of it for others to see, and then ask them to guess the word."

"I gueth I don't like that game," said Puss, and Kitty looked so puzzled that her father laughed and said: "Well, we'll have a charade right now, and then if you don't like it, we will have to think up some other game. Puss, you must help me, and Kitty can be the party and guess the charade."

So Puss and her father went just inside

the store door and, after a good deal of whispering, Puss came out with a small lamp in her hand, and in a moment her father followed, struck a match, and then lighted the lamp.

"Now, what word have we made a picture of?" asked Mr. Jones.

"Lamps and matches," answered Kitty.

"No! No!" said Puss.

"Well," said Mr. Jones, "when I strike a match what do I make?"

"A blaze," answered Kitty.

"Not always," replied Mr. Jones. "Now this time I made a light."

"Lamplight!" exclaimed Kitty triumphantly, and then she was eager to take part in a charade herself, and Mr. Jones had a busy morning.

"Now we can have a lovely party," said both the little girls when they went home to dinner; "can't we have it soon, mother?"

Mrs. Jones promised to send word to Mrs. Freeman and to Mrs. Worthley at the

first opportunity, and in a few days they had received their invitations to come to The Corners to a "Charade Party."

"I have thought of a lovely charade," said Kitty, the day of the party, "and Puss and I are going to do it. It's something nobody at the party except Puss and I could do."

"I think I will make some hearts and rounds," said Mrs. Jones.

"Oh, goody!" said Puss, for hearts and rounds were the richest and sweetest of pound cake, cooked in tiny round tins and in little heart-shaped tins, and both the little girls thought there was nothing that tasted so good.

Edith wondered what a charade party would be like, and when Mrs. Freeman explained the meaning of charade, she was sure that it would be the nicest kind of a good time.

The guests arrived in season for dinner, for both Mrs. Worthley and Mrs. Freeman

felt anxious to reach their homes before nightfall, so the games were planned to come early in the afternoon.

Mr. Jones had made a little platform at one end of the sitting room, and on this the charades were to be given. The first one was "Lamplight," as Mr. Jones thought that an easy word to guess, and Mrs. Freeman guessed it at once.

Then Mr. Jones said, "The next charade is the first name of the greatest man in this country."

Then he pinned a big "A" on the wall.

"That's the first syllable," whispered Kitty, who sat close by Edith. Then Mr. Jones made a strange noise which caused the whole company to laugh, and which he explained was the way a donkey talked.

"And that's the second syllable," said Kitty.

Then Mr. Jones brought an entire ham into the sitting-room and put it upon the

table. "And that is the third and last syllable," he said.

"I know," said Hamilton. "It's the President's name, Abraham."

There were a number of words pictured, all of which were easily guessed, and then Mr. Jones said; "Now, Kitty, we are ready for yours."

Kitty smiled at Puss, and the two little girls went up on the platform and stood, hand in hand, smiling down at their friends and looking exactly alike.

"Twins, of course," said Hamilton, and the rest of the party echoed his "of course."

"I think that your charade was the very best one of all, Kitty," said Edith; "and I think it is a lovely party."

Then Mrs. Jones brought in a big plate of the hearts and rounds, all nicely frosted, and Edith looked at them admiringly. She told Kitty and Puss that she was going to visit her sister very soon. "I am going to ride horseback," she said. The twins

thought it would be a great adventure to take so long a journey on horseback, and Edith promised to tell them all about it when she returned.

“Oh, Kitty!” she whispered, as she bade her little friends good-by; “when I get home from Eliza’s I can cure Puss of lisping if you want me to.” But Kitty was not paying strict attention to what Edith was saying just then, for her father was handing each one of the guests a little square package, saying as he gave it: —

“Here is the last charade of all; it’s only one word, and you will guess it as soon as you open the package, which you mustn’t do until you are at home.”

“Oh, what is it, father?” asked Kitty.

“Why, you and Puss will have to guess, too,” he said, handing each of them a box. “And you must not open your packages until supper time.”

As Hamilton drove past Mr. Jones’s store, Mrs. Freeman touched the boy’s arm, and

pointed to the tall flagpole where the Stars and Stripes floated, and the boy took off his cap. "I always feel like cheering, whenever I see that flag," he said.

"Of course you do," responded Mrs. Freeman. "That's the way all good soldiers feel."

"I'd like to be with David," answered the boy. "Of course he's older, but he isn't much bigger."

"We couldn't get along without you, Hamilton," said his mother, from the back seat.

"Indeed we couldn't!" said Mrs. Freeman. Then they all wondered what the charade was that they were taking home in the package.

It was nearly dusk when the Worthleys said good-by to Mrs. Freeman and Edith, and by the time the fire was started and Black Betty and Posy given their supper, it was lamplight.

"Now is the time to guess our charades,"

said Mrs. Freeman. "You give the first guess, Edith."

"I guess 'candy'!" said Edith.

"Why, so do I!" said Mrs. Freeman, laughingly, and then they both untied the little packages, and, sure enough, inside were peppermints, and lemon-drops, and big round candy gooseberries.

"Oh!" said Edith, happily. "This is almost as good as another party. Don't we have lovely times, Mrs. Freeman?"

"Indeed we do!" was the answer.

"I shall have so many things to tell Eliza," said Edith, with a little sigh of content.

CHAPTER XVI

EDITH'S JOURNEY

HAMILTON had agreed to escort Edith to her sister's, and looked forward to the journey. The day set was just after the party at Mrs. Jones's. Mrs. Freeman had told Hamilton to be ready for an early start, and the sun was just creeping into sight when he arrived.

Both horses were good travellers, and Hamilton planned to reach Eliza's long before noon, and give his horse a good rest before starting for home.

The morning decided upon proved crisp and chilly. The fences were white with frost, and the sun was not fully up when Hamilton rode into the yard. Black Betty was all saddled and bridled, and Edith's valise was firmly tied on the back of

the saddle. Mrs. Freeman had made her a divided skirt, which with high-laced boots, neat jacket, and pretty red hood, made Edith a very trig little figure as she mounted Black Betty all ready for the start.

Hamilton knew the road well; he was acquainted with the ferry where they would cross, and Mrs. Freeman felt sure that they would reach their destination safely.

“In just two weeks from to-day I will be coming home,” said Edith, as she bade Mrs. Freeman good-by. They started off at a brisk canter. “Edith is a dear child,” she thought, as she turned back to the house, “and I believe she would do anything for me.”

They had gone but a short distance when a small gray figure sprang out from the grass near the roadway, and bounded dangerously near to Black Betty's feet.

“Oh!” exclaimed Edith. “If here isn't Tinkletoes! What will I do with him?”

"Why don't you take him along to your sister's?" said Hamilton.

"How can I?" asked Edith, stopping her horse and looking anxiously down at the kitten. "It's too far for him to walk, and I can't hold him all the way."

"I know how to carry him," said Hamilton. "I've got some fishline in my pocket, and I can knot a sort of bag and put him in it so we can carry him first-rate."

Hamilton dismounted, produced the cord from his pocket, and in a short time had made a knotted bag that would hold Tinkletoes fairly well. He put the kitten in, and Edith fixed it as comfortably as possible on the saddle in front of her; and it was not long before Tinkletoes adapted himself to his new position, although now and then he mewed plaintively.

"I think it was fine of Mrs. Freeman to give me this chance to go over the river," said Hamilton. "Perhaps we may meet

some of the soldiers after we get on the Missouri side."

"You could frighten them away," said Edith.

"Oh, I guess it would only be some of our own soldiers. See that jack-rabbit!" and Edith looked just in time to catch a glimpse of a gray streak sailing over a fence. "That was a dandy jump!" said the boy, admiringly. "I wish I'd brought my rifle along, for we'll be apt to see a coyote or two before we get to the river."

The road was shaded here and there by big cottonwoods, and now and then a flurry of wind would bring the leaves dancing about them. The horses were fresh and in good spirits, and raced smoothly along over the pleasant road. Edith's cheeks began to grow red with the air and exercise, and she was sure that it was the most delightful journey possible, to ride Black Betty all the way to her sister's home.

When they came to a slight rise of

ground, Hamilton drew rein and rose in his saddle.

“What is it?” asked Edith, bringing Black Betty to a standstill.

“Why!” answered Hamilton, “I can’t see Mr. Jones’s flag at The Corners. I have always stopped here to look at it, but now it’s gone. I’ll bet somebody has tried to cut down his flagpole.”

“Oh, no! I can see it. Look!” and Edith pointed a little to the right.

“Hurrah!” cried Hamilton, lifting his cap as he caught sight of the distant flutter of the flag. “I tell you it always makes me feel good when I see Mr. Jones’s flag flying. That’s the highest point in this part of the State, and I’ll bet more than one rebel over in Missouri has got a glimpse of the Stars and Stripes. They’ve tried to haul it down, too, but Mr. Jones is ready for any old copperhead who tries that on.”

“Are there rebels in Missouri?” questioned Edith.

"Well, I guess there are!" answered Hamilton. "And they would like to get hold of Illinois if they could, but we stand by the flag."

"Oh, look at that!" exclaimed Edith, for directly in front of them, and almost under their horses' feet, was a mother grouse with her half-grown brood, scurrying across the road.

As they neared the river another jack-rabbit appeared, and went down the road in front of them in long, flying leaps. Edith pressed her heels against Black Betty's sides, and in an instant was flying after it. Hamilton joined in the chase. The rabbit, in one of its long leaps, turned its head as if to see what was coming after it, and then turned in its course and fled over the brown fields.

"Say, I forgot all about the kitten!" said Hamilton, as they rode on more slowly. "Did it stay on all right?"

"Yes," laughed Edith. "It stuck its claws right into the saddle and hung on."

210 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

“Good for Tinkletoes! He’ll make a trained cat yet. Say, aren’t you hungry, Edith?”

“Why, I guess I am,” said Edith; “but we’ve had such a good time I forgot about it.”

“Mrs. Freeman gave me this box of lunch,” Hamilton said, pointing to a package tied to his saddle. “Let’s stop and eat it before we get to the river.”

They stopped near a convenient fence and dismounted, much to Tinkletoes’ satisfaction. Edith was sure Black Betty did not need fastening, but Hamilton said that it never was safe to take chances on a journey. So he loosened the horse’s bridle reins and fastened them to the fence. Edith untied the box, and the children sat down to eat their lunch. There were two mince turnovers, which Hamilton eyed with approval, a number of squares of spicy gingerbread, and some bread and butter. It did not take them long to finish their

lunch, and now they were eager to reach the ferry.

Hamilton carefully led the way down the somewhat slippery bank to the river, and blew the horn for the ferryman. In a few moments they saw the big flatboat starting out from the opposite shore. The ferryman and Hamilton were well acquainted, and Hamilton told him that he would be back in an hour or two, after he had taken Edith safely to her sister's.

"I guess Eliza will be surprised to see me come riding up," said Edith, as they came in sight of the low, shabby house where the Stones lived.

"And I guess she will be surprised to see Tinkletoes," said Hamilton.

Mrs. Stone came round the corner of the house and stood looking down the road. She was watching Hamilton and Edith, and thinking what a pretty picture they made as they came swiftly forward.

"My soul!" she exclaimed, as they came

nearer. "If it isn't Edith!" and she hurried down to the road to meet them.

"Oh, Eliza!" called Edith, bringing Betty to a full stop and almost falling in her eagerness to get to her sister. The little girl clung round the woman's neck, and for a moment forgot all about her kitten. Hamilton looked at them in surprise.

"I'm so glad! so glad to see you, dear Eliza!" said Edith.

"Are you now, honey!" responded the woman, smiling happily down at the little girl. "Well, I sort of thought you'd forget all about your old sister, living in Mrs. Freeman's nice house so long; but I'm real glad to see you."

Tinkletoes now began to scramble about on the saddle, and Hamilton lifted him down and set him free from the clumsy net, while Edith explained how the kitten had followed her.

"You tell Mrs. Freeman about Tinkletoes, won't you, Hamilton?" Edith said, when

the boy was ready to start for home, leading Black Betty.

The boy nodded smilingly. "Yes," he answered; "and I'll come after you two weeks from to-day."

"I have a present for you, Eliza," Edith said when she unpacked her bag. "I made it all myself," and she handed Eliza a neat little package.

Eliza's face brightened. "Well, honey," she said, "I haven't had a present before for ten years," and she undid the paper. Inside was a pretty white apron, with a flounce on the bottom, and wide strings.

"There, that is a beauty!" said Eliza; and she admired the stitches and praised the gift until Edith felt sure that she had given her just what Eliza most wanted.

Mr. Stone was away, Eliza said, and would not be at home until the next night.

Edith did not mind, it was Eliza she wanted to see; and she had so many things to tell her about Grace, about the little

214 LITTLE HEROINE OF ILLINOIS

Jones girls, and about all that she was learning, that night came only too quickly. The little house had only three rooms, the kitchen and two bedrooms. There were no doors between the sleeping rooms and the kitchen, only curtains of calico.

“Eliza,” Edith said, as she went into her little room, with Tinkletoes in her arms, “wouldn’t it be lovely if you lived at Mrs. Freeman’s too! If you did, I should be perfectly happy.”

“Well, honey, I’m mighty glad you don’t forget me,” answered Eliza from the kitchen.

“Mrs. Freeman is so good, Eliza,” continued the little girl. “Do you s’pose I can ever do anything to show her how much I love her?”

“I shouldn’t wonder if you could,” said Eliza; “but now you go right to sleep.”

The next morning Edith told her sister about David, and his ride to the Union camp.

“Don’t you say anything about it before

Sam," said Eliza. "Sam has got into bad company. He's a good Union man underneath, but just now some Confederates have got hold of him, and he's off with them now."

"Oh, Eliza!" exclaimed Edith. "What will you do? Isn't it awful!"

"There isn't much I can do, little sister," said Eliza, "only just pray that he'll come to his senses. It means a lot to me to have you come just now. I was feeling pretty lonesome."

Edith was conscious of a new affection for her sister. She remembered how pleasant Eliza had always been, how uncomplaining, and she made a new resolve. After this, she thought, she would try to make Eliza happy.

"I guess saying prayers does good," she responded encouragingly. "Mrs. Freeman says them for the Captain, and she says them for David, too. So, if you keep saying them for Sam, I guess it will help."

A little smile crept round Eliza's thin lips. "What will you do all the days here, honey," she said, "without any lessons or anything to do? You'll be getting lonesome."

"Oh, no, Eliza. I'm so glad to see you and be right side of you and tell you things. And then Tinkletoes is here, too."

The day passed very quickly and again Edith was in the little bedroom ready to go to sleep.

"Sam will be coming in late to-night, honey," said her sister, "so don't you be afraid if you hear him in the kitchen, but just shut your eyes and keep quiet."

"Yes," answered Edith, half asleep.

It was several hours later when she was suddenly awakened by the sound of voices. She could hear her brother-in-law's voice and those of several other men. Lying behind the calico curtain, Edith could hear the strange conversation from the men in the outer room. She listened fearfully, and

heard them say that a band of Confederates were even then gathered under the cliffs back from the river, and were to be sent across the Mississippi to make a raid on southern Illinois.

Edith overheard that a detachment of Prince's men on the east, and some of Kirby Smith's from Kentucky, were to enter Illinois at the same time, and try to reach and hold Jonesboro, thirty miles above Cairo, destroy the railroads, and burn the homes of all Union people whose names they had obtained from Southern sympathizers.

Edith hardly dared to listen to more. This meant, she well knew, that Mrs. Freeman's home was in danger. Even now these men might be on their way to burn and destroy. Somehow she must get to Mrs. Freeman and warn her. She slipped out of bed and dressed, putting on her stout shoes and riding skirt. The men in the kitchen did not notice the slight noise she

made. When she was all ready, she sat on the edge of the bed, holding the kitten, and wondering how she could get out of the house.

But fortune favored her. In a short time Sam's companions said they must be moving on, and Sam went outdoors with them. This was Edith's chance. She slipped into Eliza's room and found her sister awake. In a hurried whisper the child told her plan, and Eliza listened and half-tearfully agreed; and the little girl slipped out of the house and was speeding down the road to the river before Sam had returned to the kitchen. It was dark and Edith stumbled over the rough road, but she did not falter. She wondered what the ferryman would say when she asked him to set her across.

It was nearly daylight when she rapped at his door. "Well!" he exclaimed, when she said that she wanted to cross the river. "Got homesick so soon, have you? You



SHE REALIZED THAT THERE WAS A WALK OF NEARLY TWENTY MILES BEFORE HER. — *Page 219.*

and that kitten are too young to be away from home long, I guess."

He rowed her across in a small boat, and as Edith went up the rough road from the river she realized that there was a walk of nearly twenty miles before her. The morning was cool, the sun was not yet up, and Edith walked briskly on. She wanted to run, but realized that she must not. She thought of David's ride to save the regiment; perhaps what she was doing would save Mrs. Freeman's home, and Mrs. Freeman would know just what to do when she told her what she had heard.

But as she plodded on a new fear assailed her. Suppose those men in hiding were already on their way to carry out their wicked plans. The tears rolled down the little girl's cheeks at the thought. On and on she walked. The sun showed her that the morning was rapidly advancing. Several times she hid behind fences or trees to escape the questions of travellers whom she

saw in the distance; then when they had passed, she started on. Now and then she would let Tinkletoes run beside her.

Noon found her with her journey hardly half finished, and with aching feet and arms. But she did not stop to rest. It was nearly dusk when the child came in sight of the Freeman house. Tired out, she crawled up the steps and opened the kitchen door.

“Edith!” exclaimed Mrs. Freeman, springing forward toward the exhausted child.

Edith gasped out her story, and Mrs. Freeman listened earnestly.

“Then there is not a moment to lose,” said the courageous woman. “I must ride to Jonesboro to-night. Edith, you are a heroine! You have saved my home, and far more than that, for you may have saved the State.”

CHAPTER XVII

THE INVASION OF ILLINOIS

MRS. FREEMAN realized that there was no time to lose, but she helped Edith undress and gave her a bowl of warm bread and milk. The little girl was completely exhausted, and the soft bed seemed the best place in the world. Tinkletoes followed her upstairs and curled up on the bed, purring happily.

“Edith, you have done me the greatest service any one could do,” said Mrs. Freeman, “and now you must help me still more. I am going to ride Black Betty to Jonesboro and leave you here alone. I shall come back as soon as I can, but until I come you must stay here and take care of the place. Do you think you can?”

“Yes’m,” said Edith.

"You have been a perfect blessing," said Mrs. Freeman, leaning over to kiss the flushed face.

"A perfect blessing," Edith whispered happily to herself and in a moment was fast asleep.

Mrs. Freeman was a woman of courage. She put the saddle on the black horse, mounted, and rode swiftly off through the darkness. She hoped to reach Jonesboro before midnight in order to warn the garrison. As she thought of Edith's brave journey to warn her, a new love for the child sprang up in the heart of the loyal woman, and she resolved that Edith should always be as her own child, loved, sheltered, and cared for. Betty went as if she realized the importance of her mistress's mission, and before midnight Mrs. Freeman could see the lights of Jonesboro.

There was no trouble for her after that. The ranking officer of the day listened to her story, and immediately telegraphed to

Governor Yates. A return telegram assured Mrs. Freeman that the homes of the loyal people should be protected.

She was urged to be the guest of the wife of the officer in command, but she smilingly refused. "The little heroine who brought me the message is in charge of my home," she answered, "and I must start back as soon as my horse has fed and rested."

"You have done your State a great service," said the officer, but Mrs. Freeman shook her head.

"Oh, no," she answered. "It is the little girl, Edith Austin, who is the heroine. She walked almost as far as I have ridden to bring me the message in season."

It was nearly daylight when Mrs. Freeman started for home. Betty seemed to know that she was homeward bound and galloped along as if she had no idea of being tired.

A few miles out from Jonesboro a man sprang from behind a clump of bushes and

seized Betty's bridle. Without an instant's hesitation Mrs. Freeman leaned forward and struck her captor across the face with the whip. With a fierce exclamation he released his hold, and Betty sprang forward, and for a long distance Mrs. Freeman urged her to her best speed. Then, as the morning advanced and she began to note familiar landmarks, her anxiety lessened, and she allowed Betty to walk or to go at an easy gallop.

It was early in the afternoon when she rode into the yard. Posy was lowing as if to say that she had not been milked. The house had a deserted look. Mrs. Freeman slipped down from the saddle and led Betty into the stable, took off the saddle, and gave the horse a pail of fresh water and a feed of oats, and then went toward the house.

Edith was not in the kitchen or the sitting-room. Mrs. Freeman called her name, but there was no response. Half-fearfully she went up the stairs and softly

opened the door into Edith's room. The little girl lay there fast asleep.

Mrs. Freeman went into her own room and lay down, and it was late that afternoon when she woke up and found Edith smiling down at her.

"I've made a fire and got breakfast," said Edith, "only I guess it is supper."

"I guess it is," responded Mrs. Freeman. "Well, I made the journey safely, and the Governor is going to take care of us," she said as they went downstairs together.

Edith had spread the little table, and there was cold meat, bread and butter, apple sauce, and gingerbread, and the tea-kettle was boiling and bubbling.

"You are the most helpful girl in the world!" declared Mrs. Freeman. "And the dearest and the bravest," she continued.

And Edith began to feel that at last she had really carried out her wish and performed a real service for her friend.

Mrs. Freeman asked many questions

about Eliza and Sam, and resolved in some way to be of service to them for Edith's sake.

For a day or two they were both tired and anxious and did not go any distance from the house. It was the third day after Mrs. Freeman's ride when Captain Zeb Stuart came riding into the yard. He brought great news. Fifty wagons and seventy-five Confederate soldiers had been captured on the Illinois side, and were now safe on their way to Cairo as prisoners. A similar capture had been made across from Paducah.

"I guess this ends the invasion of Illinois," said the Captain, "and you can feel perfectly safe after this. The Union army is gaining at every point. I haven't any medal for this small heroine," he said, smiling at Edith, "but perhaps she would like a bright button cut from a soldier's coat."

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said Edith, and the

smiling soldier parted with one of his valued buttons.

"I will always keep it," said Edith, gratefully.

"I will give you a gold chain to wear it on, so that it will always remind you of how you saved the State," said Mrs. Freeman.

"I have other news for you," said Captain Zeb. "I saw David Goddard, and he asked me to tell you that he was to have a furlough and would be here the last two days of October."

"That will be Hallowe'en," said Edith.

"We will have a party," said Mrs. Freeman.

Captain Stuart rode off, leaving a very happy household behind him.

"Now, if I could only get good news from Captain Freeman," said Mrs. Freeman, "I should feel as if all my troubles were over."

That very afternoon Mrs. Jones and Puss

and Kitty brought a letter from Captain Freeman. He said that he would be home late in October.

“Oh, isn’t that lovely!” exclaimed Edith. “He will be home for our party!” and she told Puss and Kitty all about Hallowe’en, and the wishing rings. “But all my wishes are coming true so fast,” said Edith, “that I shall hardly have a wish to put in the rings.”

Then she remembered Eliza. “Oh, yes, I shall,” she said, and resolved to wish that Eliza might have a comfortable home, and that Sam might avoid bad company.

A few days later Mrs. Freeman told Edith that she was going away to be absent all day. “I shall ride Black Betty, and we shall not be home until night,” she said; “and you and Tinkletoes must keep house for me.”

“Just as we did when you went to Jonesboro?” asked Edith, with a laugh.

“You need not sleep all day this time,” responded Mrs. Freeman.

It seemed a very long day to Edith. She fed Posy and the chickens, she visited Grace in the attic, she knit several times around on a pair of beautiful red stockings, and she admired her brass button; but still the hours dragged, and she watched the road eagerly for a sight of Mrs. Freeman.

It was six o'clock before Mrs. Freeman reached home, but she seemed so happy and in such gay spirits, and Edith was so glad to have her safe home again, that she forgot to be curious or to ask questions.

"Do you realize that Captain Freeman will be here next week, and that David will be here, and that Hallowe'en will be here?" said Mrs. Freeman, as they sat together before the open fire.

"Oh, yes!" said Edith, happily.

"And we are going to have gay doings," continued Mrs. Freeman. "I have asked Mr. and Mrs. Jones and the twins to come over and stay all night, and Hamilton and his mother, and we will have the loveliest time."

“Can Hamilton stay all night?” questioned Edith.

“Indeed he can. Everything is safe enough now, thanks to you, my dear child.”

After Edith was in bed that night she wondered where Mrs. Freeman had been that day, and why she did not tell her about it. “Perhaps it is some surprise for Hallowe’en,” thought Edith.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CURE FOR LISPING

THE very next day after Mrs. Freeman's absence Mrs. Jones and Kitty came driving into the Freemans' yard.

"Oh, Edith!" said Kitty, as soon as the little girls had gone up to the attic playhouse. "School begins next Monday, and Puss and I have to go. And," she continued, without waiting for Edith's response, "another dreadful thing has happened. I've got to learn to sing!"

"Hi, Betty Martin," hummed Edith.

"Not that way," said Kitty, scornfully; "but this way: 'Do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si-do.'"

"Oh!" said Edith. "Well, Puss can never do that. Wouldn't it be funny to hear Puss sing that song Mrs. Freeman sings, 'The Sweet Summer Morning'?"

"But I don't want to learn unless Puss does," said Kitty. "We always do the same things, and now mother says that it's no use for Puss to take lessons because she lisps so."

Edith looked very sober for a moment, and then she said: "Kitty, I can cure Puss of lisping. Don't you remember that I told you so at your charade party?"

"How? How could you, Edith?" responded Kitty, eagerly. For Kitty had been hearing a great deal about Edith, and believed that she could doubtless accomplish remarkable things.

"Well, I'm not going to tell you exactly the way it's done," said Edith, "but Mrs. Freeman told me once about a man who stuttered, and this man wanted to make speeches, but of course he couldn't unless he was cured of stuttering; and so he went off to a cave where it was quiet, and he —" Edith hesitated for a moment and then concluded swiftly, "cured himself."

"But there isn't any cave near here," objected Kitty.

"No," said Edith, "but there is the old hay-shed down back of the barn."

"I don't believe we can come over again very soon," said Kitty. "Don't you suppose Mrs. Freeman would let you go home this afternoon and stay all night? Our attic is big and we could go up there."

"That would be lovely," said Edith. "Let's go and ask her," and the two children hurried down the stairs. Mrs. Jones seconded Kitty's invitation and Mrs. Freeman consented that Edith should return to The Corners with them and stay all night.

Kitty whispered to Edith several times about how pleased her mother would be if she only knew what Edith was going to do for Puss. "Do let's tell mamma," pleaded Kitty, "I guess it would please her more than having you save the State;" but Edith was firm.

"I wouldn't want to tell your mother

until Puss had stopped lisping. I don't remember exactly, but I'm quite sure that the man who cured himself went off all alone and didn't tell any one. But Puss isn't old enough to do that; I shall have to be with her and tell her just what to do."

"And I shall be there, too," insisted Kitty.

"I guess so," responded Edith.

"You girls seem to have a good many secrets," said Mrs. Jones, laughingly. "You have had your heads together whispering nearly all the way."

"It's only one secret, mother," said Kitty, "and it's a lovely secret. It's something Edith is going to do."

"Then I'm sure it's all right," said Mrs. Jones, looking at Edith kindly, "for she has helped a great many people just by being thoughtful and ready to do her part."

Edith flushed under this unexpected praise and became more than ever determined to cure Puss of that unfortunate lisp.

"That's just what she is going to do now," said Kitty, eagerly. "She is going to —"

But Edith seized Kitty's arm just in time. "You mustn't tell," she said, "not until it is done."

"That is a very good plan sometimes," said Mrs. Jones.

"You will know all about it very soon, Mrs. Jones," said Edith, "and it really is something nice, something that will please you."

"Shall you tell Puss?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"Oh, yes!" said Kitty. "Why, it's —" but another grasp on her arm checked her just in time. "Secrets are such hard things to keep, and this is the first one I ever had," she sighed.

Before they reached The Corners the two little girls had managed to whisper most of their arrangements for Puss's cure. "Of course I can't tell you all about it until I ask Puss if she is willing to do it," said Edith.

“It isn’t anything that will hurt her?” questioned Kitty. “Because if it is she can’t do it. I’d rather have her lisp all her life than have her hurt.”

“I don’t believe it will hurt her,” said Edith; “it didn’t say in the story that it hurt the man.”

“Will it take very long?” again whispered Kitty. “Will it take more than ten minutes?”

“Ten minutes! It will take hours, and seems to me the man in the story was days and days being cured, but he stuttered; Puss only lisps, so it ought not to take so long. But if she can’t talk plainly by tomorrow, why, she will have to keep on doing just as I tell her until she is cured.”

“I do think it’s the luckiest thing that you came to live with Mrs. Freeman!” said Kitty, admiringly. “But it seems as if I couldn’t wait to know what it is that Puss will have to do.”

When they drove into the yard Puss came

running out to meet them. "Ithn't it lovely to have Edith thtay all night," she said.

"The girls have a secret to tell you, Puss," said her mother.

"A thecret?" asked Puss, wonderingly. "I gueth I don't know what a thecret ith."

"It's something that no one must tell," explained Edith.

"Then I can't know, can I?" asked Puss.

The little girls went into the house together, and, after Edith and Kitty had taken off their jackets and hats, Kitty said, "Now let's go up attic, and then, Puss, you can hear the secret. It is something lovely that Edith is going to do for you, Puss."

"Ith it?" questioned Puss, happily. "Ith it anything about dollth? or ith it about thkool?"

"Come right up attic and she'll tell us," responded Kitty.

"But how will I know which one is Puss if she don't lisp?" said Edith, just as she

was ready to explain how the wonderful cure was to be performed.

“But I thall lithp,” exclaimed Puss.

“That is what the secret is about, Puss. Edith is going to cure you of lispng so that you will talk just like other people.”

Then a strange thing happened. Puss threw herself face down on the attic floor and declared that she would not be cured; that it was nice to lisp, and that if Edith Austin touched her she would “thkream and thkream.”

“Then of course I shan’t tell you about what it is,” said Edith, more in sorrow than in anger. “But it isn’t anything hard. I’d do it myself in a minute if I were you, Puss. The man who did cure himself the way I was going to cure you was a famous man.”

“Wath he a doctor?” questioned Puss.

“No,” said Edith. “I believe he was a sailor.”

“Didn’t he cut hith tongue looth?” again asked Puss.

"Why, no, of course he didn't," answered Edith.

Puss seemed to gain courage from this reply, and rose slowly to her feet. "Well," she said, "onth a woman came here, and the told my mother that a doctor could cut my tongue looth tho I wouldn't lithp."

"It doesn't hurt a bit," said Edith. "The way this man did was to fill his mouth full of nice clean pebbles and then talk."

This seemed very funny to Kitty, but Puss still regarded Edith anxiously. "I don't want pebbleth in my mouth," she objected.

"I tell you what!" said Edith. "Let's go out in the field and get a lot of nice clean little stones, and we'll all put them in our mouths and talk, and then Puss will be cured before she knows it."

"You'll do that, won't you, Puss?" asked her sister, and Puss smiled again and said "Yeth"; and away went the children to the field after the little peb-

bles which Edith carefully described to them.

“We will have to go up attic to talk,” said Edith, “because if people heard us they wouldn’t understand, and up attic we will be by ourselves.”

“Won’t it be lovely, Puss, for you to be cured of lisping? Then you will talk just as I do, and we will be exactly alike and no one can tell us apart.”

“Then I can thing, can’t I?” said Puss, happily.

“We will practise singing if you want to,” said Edith, “but we’ll have to wash these pebbles.”

It did not take long to wash them perfectly clean, and the little girls were soon back in the attic and Puss ready to begin the cure.

“We will put in as many as we can,” directed Edith, “and then we will walk up and down and sing: ‘Hi, Betty Martin, tiptoe fine,’ just like that.”

"But if I thing I'm 'fraid I'll thwallow the thtonth," said Puss, anxiously.

"I guess we hadn't better sing," said Kitty, and Edith amiably yielded.

"But we must say words beginning with s," she said; "because, if it wasn't for s's Puss wouldn't lisp, would you, Puss?"

Puss shook her head. Her mouth was not very large, and with three fair-sized pebbles in it she was very sure that she could not speak at all.

"We can say 'six singing swallows swept slowly seaward,'" suggested Kitty. "That's what father has Puss try to say sometimes. It always makes him laugh."

But at this Puss shook her head more fiercely than ever and made strange sounds which Edith could not understand, but which Kitty at once explained.

"Puss says she won't say s's. She says if she can't be cured without saying s's that she'll lisp all her life."

Puss nodded to confirm Kitty's explanation.

Edith sighed. "Well," she said, "I'm sure I can't help it if she won't do the way the man in the story did. Of course she won't be cured if she acts like a baby."

Puss tried to talk now, but only to spit out the pebbles and to cry loudly, "Oh, I've thwallowed a thtone! I've thwallowed a thtone!"

"No, Puss!" screamed Edith, rushing toward the younger girl and pounding her on the back. "Stand on your head, Puss, you must!"

The little girl quickly obeyed, and a small pebble dropped from her mouth.

"O-oh!" sighed Edith and Kitty in unison.

"I than't be cured," insisted Puss. "I like to lithp."

"And we like to have her lisp, don't we, Edith?" said Kitty, loyally. "The only reason we wanted to cure you, Puss, was so you could take singing lessons with me."

“I thall take thinging lethonth,” said Puss. “Father thaid I could.”

“I’m real glad, after all, that Puss isn’t cured,” said Edith, “because now I shall be sure she *is* Puss.”

“Well,” said Kitty, “I’m real glad that I know how to cure her, and perhaps when we get older we’ll try again.”

“Let’s keep it for a secret,” suggested Edith, and the twins agreed.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HALLOWE'EN SURPRISE

“THIS is to be the best Hallowe'en party you ever went to,” declared Mrs. Freeman, as she and Edith made preparations for the home-coming of Captain Freeman and for David's brief visit. “It is going to be a two days' party, for the Joneses and the Worthleys are going to stay two days, and David will be here two days on his way to see his mother. And my dear husband will be here for two whole weeks.”

Edith remembered the story of Prince Tinkletoes as she made the rings of sweet grass and hung them from her bedroom window. “I'm sure he won't go by this house without seeing that he's invited,” she thought. In each ring she put a loving wish for her sister. “Everything else I have

wished for has come true," she thought happily. "I know Prince Tinkletoes whispered to Mrs. Freeman to love me, and now she says that I have been a brave girl and helped her. And David is a brave soldier and is coming home, and oh!" — and here Edith gave a little skip of delight, — "everybody is coming to our Hallowe'en party. Puss and Kitty and Hamilton and all." Then Edith's face grew a little sober. "I wonder if Eliza ever had a Hallowe'en party."

Edith helped Mrs. Freeman make the big pans full of sugar cookies, she stoned raisins and chopped mincemeat for the spicy mince pies, and she helped pluck the fat chickens that Mrs. Freeman was to roast.

Captain Freeman came three days before Hallowe'en, and he told Edith that she had been as brave as any soldier could be. "You are a little heroine," he said, "and I wish you really were our

own little girl," and Edith's face flushed happily.

"She is our own little girl," said Mrs. Freeman.

"It will be nice for both you and Edith to have a trustworthy man and woman living here," Edith heard the Captain say next day, and she wondered what he meant. Somehow there seemed to be something mysterious going on that they did not want Edith to know. "I guess it's the Hallowe'en surprise," she thought.

The last day of October came at last, and Mr. and Mrs. Jones and Puss and Kitty were the first to arrive. Then David came riding up on the gray horse, and what a warm welcome was waiting for him. Mr. Jones and Captain Freeman could hardly do enough to show him how welcome he was, and Mrs. Freeman called him her "dear, brave soldier boy." How different was this coming from the day when, sick and discouraged, he had slid from his horse at

that same door an unwelcome visitor, and when Edith had led him to a place of safety!

"Say, you are a real little brick!" he exclaimed when Edith came running to meet him. "And I am as proud of you as if you were my sister."

Then Mrs. Worthley and Hamilton arrived, and as David had a letter for them from Mr. Worthley they were even more pleased to see him than he had expected.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings," said Mrs. Worthley, gratefully, as she received the letter.

"Now we are all here," said Edith.

Mrs. Freeman looked at her smilingly. "Why, no," she said. "I am expecting some one else."

"There they come now," said Mr. Jones, and Edith wondered who could be coming to the party that she did not know, and looked eagerly down the road.

She could see a wagon drawn by a thin white horse coming slowly along. A man and woman were in the wagon, and as Edith looked she began to wonder who it was. The woman looked like Eliza. It was Eliza! And with a joyful cry Edith ran down the road to meet her, and in a few moments Mrs. Freeman and Edith and Eliza were standing together on the steps, while Captain Freeman was showing Sam where to put his horse.

"This is your Hallowe'en surprise, dear," said Mrs. Freeman, as she sent the two sisters upstairs together.

Eliza's thin face seemed brighter and happier than when Edith had last seen her, and she had good news to tell her little sister. Mrs. Freeman had ridden over and had hired Sam to come and look after the farm, and Eliza was to live at the Freeman place and help Mrs. Freeman.

"It's been the saving of Sam," said the grateful woman, "and he'll do the best he can, and so will I."

"It's lovely, Eliza!" said Edith. "I guess the fairies found my rings, for I put just these wishes into them for you."

"Did you, dear? Well, I said a good many little prayers," said Eliza, "and I can't help but feel that they are being answered."

"Of course they are," said Edith. "Mrs. Freeman says they always are answered, and when you see Captain Freeman all safe and well, and David a good soldier, and you and Sam right here, why, I guess it proves she is right."

It was a gay Hallowe'en. The children played games —

"all that they knew
Their mothers knew others,
And those they played too,"

and when Mr. Jones and Captain Freeman played "Oats, peas, beans and barley grow," and "turned around to view their land," everybody laughed and laughed.

Hamilton stayed close by David, whom he looked at admiringly, and questioned

about the army and all that David had seen since he left the Freemans.

When Mrs. Freeman looked at David, at his straight figure and soldierly air, and noticed the new look of firmness that had come into the young soldier's face, she was grateful indeed that her "little prayers" had been heard and that the boy was on the right road.

Edith went over and stood near the boys, listening to David's account of his ride with Mr. Jones's message.

"Now tell us how you brought the news to Mrs. Freeman," he said, turning to Edith.

"Oh, I just walked and walked," said Edith, and she wondered what made them all laugh.

Then Captain Freeman came over and stood beside her, and with a hand resting on David's shoulder said: "You all know what this brave boy did, saving a disloyal regiment, and you all know what this dear girl has done, — saved our homes from destruc-

tion and, perhaps, our State from dishonor. Now, before I send you all off to bed let's give them a cheer. Hurrah for the little heroine of Illinois, and for a brave soldier boy!" and the room rang with the cheers of the happy Hallowe'en party.

Then Captain Freeman lit candles for the guests, and everybody started for bed, for the captain told them that he should call them early next morning. "I'm going to show you how to gather walnuts," he said.

Kitty and Puss shared Edith's room that night, and when they were all snugly in bed Edith asked the little girls if they believed in fairies. They were both a little doubtful on the subject.

"Well," said Edith, "when I first came to live with Mrs. Freeman we had a celebration in this very walnut grove where we are going to-morrow; and Mrs. Freeman told me about a fairy named Prince Tinkletoes, who goes about whispering in people's ears and telling them to do kind things. I guess

he must whisper in Mrs. Freeman's ears all the time, for she is always kind. I named my kitten after him."

"Did he ever whithper to you?" asked Puss sleepily.

"I'm not quite sure," replied Edith. "I thought he did that night at Eliza's when I heard those men talking; and when I tried to cure you of lisping, Puss, I thought he did then."

"I gueth he didn't," said Puss.

"I wish I could see a fairy," said Kitty. "Do you suppose they live in the woods after the frost comes?"

"Perhaps they have little houses such as bees have," suggested Edith.

"Leth go to thleep," pleaded Puss, and in a moment all three had forgotten all about Prince Tinkletoes.

The next morning was bright and sunny. A heavy frost during the night had left a white veil over the grass. Mrs. Freeman and Eliza had breakfast all ready in the sunny

kitchen, and Edith thought she had never seen any one look so happy as her sister did when she ran to kiss her good morning.

They were soon ready for the start to the grove. Mr. Jones had to return to The Corners, so he could not be one of the party, and Mr. Stone, David, and Hamilton, were to follow the others with kindlings for a fire, a small bag of potatoes for roasting, and the baskets of lunch which were all ready and waiting on the porch.

"This is another celebration, isn't it?" said Edith to Mrs. Freeman as they walked together.

"So it is," replied Mrs. Freeman; "and this time it is for Eliza."

"May I tell her that you said it was for her?" asked Edith, eagerly.

"Why, I will tell her myself," said Mrs. Freeman, smilingly.

"I guess Prince Tinkletoes is a very busy fairy these days," said Edith, as she saw her sister's face brighten, and heard her

laugh as Mrs. Freeman told her about Edith's celebration.

"You must tell her about Prince Tinkletoes, too," suggested Edith.

"Perhaps you can tell her that better than I can," said Mrs. Freeman.

Eliza listened attentively to Edith's story.

"I think Prince Tinkletoes must always live very near here," she said when Edith had finished.

Captain Freeman carried a long pole to knock down any nuts which the frost had not opened, and each one of the party had a basket or pail. But there was little use for the pole, as there was an abundance of nuts on the ground, and soon they were all at work picking them up.

Hamilton and David built a fire at a safe distance from the grove, and potatoes were put to roast and coffee to boil, and by the time the baskets and pails were filled every one was ready for a cup of coffee, a hot potato, bread and butter, and gingerbread.

"What did you and Edith do the day you celebrated?" asked Mrs. Worthley.

"We told fairy stories and played hide-and-seek," replied Mrs. Freeman.

"I always like a good fairy story," said Mrs. Jones.

"Oh, Edith! Tell about Prince Tinkles," said Kitty, and Edith told of the fairy who was always suggesting kind deeds to people.

"I don't see why we can't play hide-and-seek," said Hamilton.

"Of course we can," said Captain Freeman. "That's what we need to keep us warm. I'll be 'it' the first time, so off with you all and find the best places that you can to hide, for I'll find two or three of you the first time I look."

Away they all went in different directions.

"Where will I hide?" thought Edith. "I wonder if I couldn't climb one of those trees."

The trunks of the walnut trees were pretty smooth, but one low-growing branch proved to be within Edith's reach, and she managed to pull herself up. The other branches grew closely together, and before Hamilton's distant-sounding "coo-ee" was heard, Edith was well up from the ground. There were not many leaves left to form a screen, but Edith felt very sure that Captain Freeman would not think to look up in the trees.

She did not find it very comfortable. She stood on one branch and held tight with both hands to another branch. She could not look down, and now and then her feet slipped a little on the round branch. She could hear Captain Freeman running about and calling out the names of those he had found. Then she heard David say, "They are all in but Puss and Edith," and then Edith called, "I'm up in a tree and I can't get down."

They all came running in her direction, and in a few moments David was climbing

up the tree and soon had his arm about her and was helping her down.

"I never saw such a girl," he said laughingly. "You always want to climb up somewhere, either cliffs or trees."

"Where is Puss?" Edith asked as she stood close by Eliza.

Every one began searching for the little girl, and in a few minutes she was discovered under a big walnut tree, happily engaged in cracking nuts between two stones.

"Wath you looking for me?" she asked smilingly, as they gathered round her.

"I should say we were," said Captain Freeman, swinging the little girl to his shoulder. "Here is your carriage all ready to take you home." So Puss rode home in state.

As soon as they reached the house Hamilton and his mother started for their drive home. David's way led in the same direction, and his big gray trotted along beside the Worthley wagon. Mrs. Jones and the

twins also said good-by, and set out for their journey to The Corners.

“No one but the family left,” said Captain Freeman, as they waved their good-bys. “Now, Sam, I guess you and I will have to look after the horses,” and the two men started for the stable, while Edith, holding Eliza’s hand fast in hers, followed Mrs. Freeman into the kitchen.

“This is our own truly home now, Eliza,” said Edith.

“Indeed it is,” said Mrs. Freeman, putting her arm around Edith, “and you are my own truly little girl.”

JUL 6 1908

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00020578373

